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ABSTRACT

The Southeastern Regional Vision for Education (SERVE) provides information on re-designing curriculum and instruction in schools, re-defining roles and responsibilities of school staffs, and promoting changes to address the needs of the Southeast's growing and diverse student population. SERVE offers a series of publications entitled "Hot Topics: Usable Research," which focus on issues of present relevance and importance in education in the region and act as guidebooks for educators. This "Hot Topics" expands the meaning of school improvement to include concepts of restructuring. Twelve characteristics of effective schools which provide the framework for this issue of "Hot Topics" include: clear goals, school-focused improvement, strong leadership, high expectations, focused program of instruction, collaborative decision making, individual and organizational development, order and discipline, maximized learning time, parent/community involvement, incentives/rewards for academic success, and careful and continuous evaluation. Each of these characteristics is addressed in the first section of this document, along with individual school research applications from the Southeast and the nation. The second section describes steps and procedures for implementing school improvement efforts. Section 3 describes current and planned state-sponsored school improvement programs in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina, and South Carolina. A list of names and addresses of other regional agencies and organizations involved with school improvement is included, as well as self-assessment forms. (LAP)

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HOT TOPICS:

Usable Research

COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

SERVE
SouthEastern Regional Vision for Education
Florida Department of Education
345 S. Magnolia Drive, Suite D-23
Tallahassee, Florida 32301-2950

October 1991

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ABOUT SERVE AND THE *HOT TOPICS* SERIES . . .

SERVE—SouthEastern Regional Vision for Education—is the new education laboratory for the southeastern United States. Funded by the U.S. Department of Education, **SERVE** is a coalition of educators, business leaders, governors and policymakers who are seeking comprehensive, lasting improvement in education in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina and South Carolina. The laboratory provides leadership, support, and research to assist state and local efforts in improving educational outcomes. All services, publications, research packets and other materials are available at no cost.

SERVE offers a series of publications entitled *Hot Topics: Usable Research*. These research-based publications focus on issues of present relevance and importance in education in the region, and are practical guidebooks for educators. Each is developed with input from experts in the field, is focused on a well-defined subject, and offers useful information, resources, descriptions of exemplary programs, and a list of contacts.

Several *Hot Topics* will be developed by **SERVE** each year. The following *Hot Topics* are now either presently available or under development:

- New Roles for Teachers and Principals: Developing Schools for the 21st Century
- Appreciating Differences: Teaching and Learning in a Culturally Diverse Classroom
- Problem-Centered Learning in Mathematics and Science
- Increasing Female and Minority Participation in Mathematics and Science
- Parent and Community Involvement in Early Childhood Education

SERVE provides many regional services. Field representatives for each state respond to local needs and identify exemplary programs. Other assistance and materials include the following:

- An Educational Clearinghouse for information searches on any subject in education,
- An electronic bulletin board to increase communication and networking throughout the region,
- A Sharing Success program to highlight and publicize exemplary programs,
- A series of policy briefs and research briefs to assist legislators and educators in formulating progressive education policy,
- Conferences and video materials to bring policy makers and other education stakeholders together and to share relevant information on a regional basis, and
- Contracted Research and Development projects throughout the region.

Based at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, SERVE also has offices in Tallahassee, Fla., Atlanta, GA., and at Delta State University in Cleveland, Miss. To request single copies of *Hot Topics*, to join the mailing list, or for more information about SERVE, write or call:

South**E**astern **R**egional **V**ision for **E**ducation (**SERVE**)
345 S. Magnolia Drive, Suite D-23
Tallahassee, FL 32301-2950
Toll free 800-352-6001

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of comprehensive school improvement is to facilitate **better learning by all students**. The goals are to improve academic achievement and student attitudes toward learning, increase critical thinking skills, and promote greater satisfaction by the general public in what the school is accomplishing. School improvement is for **all** students. It touches every aspect of school organization, including its administration and curriculum, elementary and secondary, alternative, vocational, and special education, and extends even outside the school to involve the larger community. The goal of school improvement is to see that **better learning** occurs in the most effective and meaningful manner possible.

School improvement means different things to different people. For some it is any change for the better. For others, it involves an ongoing, systematic process of improvement that becomes institutionalized in the school. In the current literature, school improvement is often described as **restructuring**. Restructuring is a fundamental, systemic change in the way schools do business. It is a rethinking of the entire educational process, from the way schools are organized to the way the curriculum is designed. This ***HOT TOPICS*** expands the meaning of school improvement to include concepts of restructuring.

Research has identified a number of strategies for school improvement. This ***HOT TOPICS*** begins with strategies based on the "Effective Schools Research." Research on effective schools began with the work of Ronald Edmonds in 1979. Since then, dozens of researchers have verified characteristics or conditions that seem to be present when schools are effective in bringing about significant gains in student achievement. These gains are independent of race or the socioeconomic condition of students.

Twelve characteristics of effective schools will provide the framework for this ***HOT TOPICS.*** These characteristics are well documented in the research literature and provide a broad framework for planning. Although each has the potential to contribute to improved student learning, **the main strength of the characteristics is in their cumulative application**. When the school is looked upon as a total learning environment, the entire institution becomes the focus for improvement -- thus the focus on **Comprehensive School Improvement**.

This ***HOT TOPICS*** provides information on re-defining roles and responsibilities of school staffs, re-designing the school's curriculum and instruction to actively engage students and promote higher-order thinking as well as basic skills, and promoting changes to address the needs of the Southeast's growing and diverse student population. The challenge for each school is to determine, in collaboration with the school district and the broader community, its current needs, and strive toward the ultimate goal of **improved learning for all students.**

The following characteristics have been selected to represent a framework that can be used for **Comprehensive School Improvement.**

1. Clear Goals
2. School-Focused Improvement
3. Strong Leadership
4. High Expectations
5. Focused Program of Instruction
6. Collaborative Decision Making
7. Individual and Organizational Development
8. Order and Discipline
9. Maximized Learning Time
10. Parent/Community Involvement
11. Incentives/Rewards for Academic Success
12. Careful and Continuous Evaluation

Each of these characteristics will be addressed in detail in **Section I**, along with examples of individual school research applications from the Southeast and the nation.

Section II describes practical steps and procedures which schools can use to initiate and implement school improvement efforts. As noted by Lezotte (1982), the effective schools research should not be viewed simplistically as a "recipe," but rather as a framework for systemic, long-term improvements. Resources and self-assessment forms are provided. Since a major focus of **SERVE** is to broker exemplary programs and practices, names and addresses are provided (**Sections IV and V**) of other regional agencies and organizations which can provide information and assistance in school improvement.

Section III describes current and planned state-sponsored school improvement/reform programs in the states in the **SERVE** region--Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina and South Carolina. Despite severe financial stresses, states in the Southeast are committed to school reform, accountability, and restructuring for better schools.

It is the hope of the Laboratory that you will use the information in this document to initiate or expand improvement efforts in your school or district. You are encouraged to make copies of enclosed materials which you find useful. If you are interested in obtaining multiple copies of this *Hot Topics* for a conference, or for school/district-wide distribution, SERVE will supply you with a free camera-ready copy.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

HOT TOPICS: COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT was prepared with the help of a Regional Review Panel consisting of State Department of Education school improvement coordinators from each of the SERVE states. These educators were brought together at a SERVE School Improvement Forum where each member described school improvement reforms in his or her state. Information provided by the Review Panelists about programs and schools in their states greatly enhanced the final product.

Regional Review Panel Members:

Patricia McLaney, Coordinator of Effective Schools, Alabama Department of Education

Dr. Walter McCarroll, Deputy Commissioner for Educational Programs, Florida Department of Education

Dr. Ida Baker, Deputy Commissioner for Human Resource Development, Florida Department of Education

Dr. Luther Rogers, Director, Office of Organizational Development and Educational Leadership, Florida Department of Education

Dr. Jim Conkwright, Director, Program Development, Georgia Department of Education

Dr. Gerald Hasselman, Bureau Director of School Improvement, Mississippi State Department of Education

Dr. Carolyn Cobb, Director, School Improvement and Development, North Carolina Department of Public Instruction

David Potter, Education Associate, Office of Policy Research, South Carolina State Department of Education

An earlier version of this publication was developed by the Florida Department of Education (DOE) with the help of an advisory committee composed of school and district administrators actively involved in comprehensive school improvement.

Advisory Committee Members:

Jim Croteau, Executive Director, Planning and Policy Development, Leon County
Ron Early, Policy Coordinator, Governor's Office
Geri Introcaso, Chair, Florida School Advisory Committee
Nancy Livesay, Coordinator, SERVEing Young Children Project, SERVE
J.P. Lutz, Director, Elementary Education, Lee County
William Manning, Director, Elementary Education, Santa Rosa County
Frank Petruzielo, Associate Superintendent, Dade County
Rose Marie Ratts, Director, Elementary Education, Orange County
Eugenia Thomas, President, Florida PTA

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Other Contributors included:

Cynthia Fields, Secretary, Florida DOE
Thomas Holland, Program Specialist, Office of Organizational Development and Educational Leadership, Florida DOE
Bob Howell, Director, Division of Vocational Education, Florida DOE
Glenda Johnson, Publications Design Specialist, SERVE
Stephanie Kadel, Research Assistant, SERVE
Dorothy Routh, Deputy Director, SERVE
Lee Shiver, Chief, Bureau of School Improvement and Instruction, Florida DOE

Hot Topics: Comprehensive School Improvement was written and produced by:

Joseph Follman, Research Associate for Communications, SERVE
Brian Curry, Policy Analyst, Office of Policy Research and Accountability, Florida DOE
Ralph Vedros, Associate Director, SERVE

Section I

What Do Effective Schools Have in Common?

1. Clear Goals
2. School Focused Improvement
3. Strong Leadership
4. High Expectations
5. Focused Program of Instruction
6. Collaborative Decision Making
7. Individual and Organizational Development
8. Order and Discipline
9. Maximized Learning Time
10. Parent/Community Involvement
11. Incentives/Rewards for Academic Success

WHAT DO EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS HAVE IN COMMON?

1. CLEAR GOALS

Every plan for comprehensive school improvement should have the same ultimate goals—**To increase student achievement and school community satisfaction by ensuring that the primary functions of the school are teaching and learning**. Principals and teachers in effective schools work together to identify school needs, and then develop, publish, and disseminate a statement of their goals and philosophy. The entire school community (students, teachers, staff, and parents) is informed of, and committed to, these goals. The goals serve as the foundation for comprehensive school improvement efforts.

- The primary goals of school improvement efforts are enhanced student achievement and school community satisfaction.
- Principals and teachers collaborate to conduct needs assessments and develop clear school goals.
- Principals and teachers understand and are committed to school goals.
- School goals and mission are communicated to all administrators, teachers, students, and parents.
- School goals are used as guidelines in planning educational objectives and activities.

(Brookover 1979; Edmonds 1979; Lezotte 1985; Lipham 1981)

The Mission

Stated simply, the mission of schools is teaching and learning, and school goals are high academic and other achievement, and satisfaction of all participants. Just as every child can learn and improve, so every school can better teach its students, refine its curriculum/instructional strategies, and improve attitudes. Effective schools never lose sight of these basic tenets, and provide regular assessments of their programs and learner outcomes to determine where they are in respect to them. Strategies are changed or adapted over time to meet changing needs.

Research affirms that teachers and principals in effective schools believe all students can master their academic work, and say this in their mission statements. These educators are committed to seeing their students learn to read, solve problems, and succeed academically. Teachers and principals in effective schools express their expectations clearly, so students and parents understand that high academic standards have been established (Brookover 1979; Lee County 1985). Schools that reach broad consensus on their goals and expectations are more likely to be successful (Purkey & Smith 1983).

Dynamite Ideas:

The Four "A's"

Most schools have goals, and there is generally little difference between the goals of successful and unsuccessful schools. But effective schools discuss and assess their goals constantly: "Academics. Attitude. Athletics. Artistry. Those are the goals at Chula Vista High School. These four *A*'s of excellence are extolled everywhere, all the time at the school. They are stressed in letters to parents and students and are discussed with students at assemblies. Each week students are cited for excellence in academics, attitude, athletics, or artistry. Teachers display posters emphasizing the four *A*'s. Excellence is constantly stressed in all phases of school life."

Source: *Good Secondary Schools: What Makes Them Tick?* U.S. DOE, 1985

Rallies for Academic Success

At Lincoln City High School in Lincolnton, Georgia, the school holds academic pep rallies which involve both student and community leaders. The purpose of the rallies is to communicate to students that academic success is highly valued by the school and community.

Lincoln County High also has an Academic Booster Club, whose primary purpose is to advance and encourage high standards of achievement in all academic areas.

Source: Heller, Dawn. Winning Ideas from Winning Schools, 1989.

2. SCHOOL-FOCUSED IMPROVEMENT

Just as each student is different, so every school is unique, with its own particular character, strengths, and needs. **It is necessary, then, for each school to institute a self-assessment of its present curriculum and other practices to identify areas on which to focus improvement, and develop goals based on its individual needs.**

- Through surveys and subsequent analyses, the school principal, along with teachers, staff, parents and others assess the school's strengths and areas needing improvement.

- A written statement of the school's beliefs and goals is developed, focusing on improving student achievement. Strategies are devised to address areas needing improvement.

- A long-term (3-5 year) school-wide improvement plan is developed, providing guidelines and recommendations for goal setting, plan initiation, implementation, evaluation, review, and institutionalization.

- There is support for the school-wide initiative at the district and state levels.

(Block 1983; Brookover et al. 1979; Farrar & Flakus-Mosqueda 1986; Hunter 1979; Lee County 1985; Levine 1983; Purkey & Smith 1983; Rutter 1981)

Conducting a Self-Assessment

Effective schools develop improvement plans which reflect actual school needs (as opposed to "wants"). Individual teachers and principals are in the best position to observe the performance of their students, and any comprehensive school improvement plan must include them. Purkey & Smith (1983) have noted that schools require "considerable autonomy in determining the exact means by which they address the problem of increasing student performance."

Typically, schools planning improvement form a representative group or team which will lead improvement efforts in the school. And while the school principal should play a critical role in any school improvement plan, there have been cases in which faculty members succeeded in implementing successful programs even when support from the principal was tenuous (Farrar & Flakus-Mosqueda 1986). The group determines areas of focus, and conducts a survey or assessment of school curriculum, facilities, instructional strategies, morale, parent/community relations and other aspects of school life.

Strategy for Improvement

Having set clear goals, the principal, faculty and advisory committees work together to develop a long-range plan for implementation. They must agree on areas where changes are needed. This agreement, as noted by Baker (1990) and others, should be based on actual needs "as revealed by collecting and analyzing data of the school learning climate." There is no quick fix to improving schools. Short-term strategies will, at best, bring about only short-term improvement. Typical

improvement plans require several years to achieve full implementation, and district and state support play a major supporting role in this process. There are several ways in which the district and state can assist in school-based improvement:

- Providing technical assistance, support, training and staff development.
- Offering incentives to schools pursuing improvement, such as grants and extra equipment.
- Giving information about other improvement efforts.
- Authorizing waivers of state and/or district regulations which hinder innovative ideas for improvement.
- Assessing school improvement efforts.
- Providing direct staff support for school and classroom efforts.
- Establishing rewards for effective schools and comprehensive school improvement.

(Bachelor 1982; Behr 1981; Enochs 1979; Farrar & Flakus-Mosqueda 1986; Levine 1982; Niedermeyer 1981; Purkey & Smith 1983; Squires 1983; Stallings 1981)

There are a few questions that everyone involved with comprehensive school improvement should consider, both individually and on a school-wide basis:

1. Do you like where you are?
2. Do you like what you do?
3. Do you like how you do it?
4. Are others satisfied with what you do?

You should be able to answer "yes" to all these questions. If you cannot, part of your improvement efforts should address these areas.

Dynamite Ideas:

Connecticut School Effectiveness Program

An early stage of the Connecticut program involved conducting a needs assessment, but teachers were hesitant to discuss school problems. There was even more reluctance to reveal these problems to outsiders. The solution was an anonymous survey which "broke the ice," and initiated substantive discussion. Noted one faculty member, "Prior to the needs assessment, people were afraid to say what the problems were. The needs assessment gave us the chance to say anonymously what we felt. Later, the problems were being discussed openly in faculty meetings" (Farrar and Flakus-Mosqueda 1986).

Gearing Efforts Toward Needs

Schools in Pearl School District in Mississippi target improvement and development efforts for each new year to address weaknesses identified by teachers and principals at the end of the previous year.

For example, at the end of one year, weak performance in math and high dropout rates were determined to be main areas of concern. The following fall staff development was geared to improving math scores and reducing dropout rates. New programs for at-risk students from second grade through high school were implemented. Additional resources were spent on new math manipulatives for elementary students, and Eisenhower funds were focused on math workshops.

School communications to parents and the community placed emphasis on helping parents help their children with math and to stay in school. Teachers supported the program because they had helped identify the problems and helped suggest solutions for them. The result: math scores improved and dropout rates decreased by 50 percent.

3. STRONG LEADERSHIP

The effective schools research has shown consistently that, as stated by Block (1983), **"leadership from the school administration (is) a critical incident" leading to school improvement and success.** In most cases, it is the school principal who fills this role, providing guidance, supervision, resources and support both instructionally and administratively.

The Principal,

- Establishes clear, high standards for instruction and performance, and makes sure that all teachers, students, and parents know them.
- Monitors classrooms and supervises instruction.
- Provides time for teachers to plan together.
- Provides feedback to support and recognize successful academic performance.
- Confers with teachers about educational issues and policies.
- Promotes staff development to enhance teachers' skills—especially training targeted toward program goals.
- Hires new teachers who will be supporters of school improvement.
- Models effective supervisory and teaching practices and is knowledgeable of education research and practice.
- Protects learning time from disruption.
- Makes sure appropriate resources are available.
- Supports staff in implementing new ideas and dealing with parents.
- Frees teachers from unnecessary administrative paperwork.
- Shares and delegates responsibilities so teachers have input in school decisions.
- Creates a positive learning environment at the school.
- Establishes procedures in written form.
- Resolves conflict fairly and consistently, through communication.
- Serves as public relations liaison for the school improvement plan to the local community.

(Block 1983; Edmonds 1979; Farrar & Flakus-Mosqueda 1986; HEW 1978; Levin 1983; Lezotte 1982; McKee & McKinney 1985; New York SDE 1974; Purkey & Smith 1983; Rutter et al. 1979; Squires et al. 1981; Stallings 1981; Venezky 1979; Weber 1971; Wynne 1980)

"Principal" Role

Effective schools have effective principals. It would be difficult to overstate the importance of the principal's role in any school improvement effort, for the principal occupies a "strategic position in the school organizational structure for developing and maintaining a school climate conducive to learning" (Block 1983). As the chief officer of a school, the principal must lead by visible example.

Effective principals are actively involved in formulating the school improvement plan. Once a plan is adopted, the principal makes clear to all teachers,

DYNAMITE IDEAS:

Turning a School Around

"Mara Clisby had her hands full when she took over Artesia High School in Lakewood, California. It was filled with gangs; one fourth of the students were absent on any given day; test scores were low. As the new principal, Mara Clisby laid down the law right off the bat: no more gang fights. She moved her desk into the girl's bathroom and held meetings and counseling there, just to stay visible. She convinced teachers to ask more of students, and students to ask more of themselves. It worked. The gang problems disappeared. Average daily attendance rose to 99 percent. Eighty percent of the students now go to college compared with 54 percent before."

Source: U.S. DOE 1985

students, and parents what the standards will be (Edmonds 1982). An effective principal participates actively in plan implementation, roaming the halls and visiting classrooms frequently—with a specific purpose in mind. Smock (1986) found that "principals of effective schools tend to spend most of their time out of their offices, and in classrooms. While there, they are primarily concerned with instructional matters."

The principal should be knowledgeable about teaching practices and issues, and regularly demonstrate them for teachers. Observation and criticism of teachers should always be coupled with advice as to how teachers may instruct more effectively. Positive feedback is an important component of principal monitoring, and successful teachers should be acknowledged and rewarded. The principal must keep classroom interruptions to a minimum by employing effective scheduling techniques that reduce disruptions, and by using the intercom only when absolutely necessary.

Shared decision-making is a critical part of any school improvement effort. The principal lets staff know that their voice in school decisions is welcome and wanted, and staff are more committed to policies to which they have contributed (Squires 1983). Roland Barth (1988) found that successful principals are able to enlist teachers in providing leadership in their schools. This capacity to share leadership, he notes, allows the latent, creative powers of teachers to be released. Sharing responsibility also frees the principal to spend more time and energy on improving instruction. Sharing responsibility breaks down barriers between staff and administrators, and fosters intellectual exchange (Purkey & Smith 1983).

Effective schools have principals who provide teachers with the resources they need to implement their curriculum. They use innovative strategies in applying for grants and other funds, and work with district and/or state officials to garner support for their programs. And while these principals give their teachers a voice in school decisions, they retain a decisive role in policies and shield their teachers from excessive paperwork and other distractions.

4. HIGH EXPECTATIONS

Teachers and administrators believe they can create a climate in which all students can learn and improve. Teachers let children know they are capable of good work and that it will be expected of them. Students feel they can positively affect their futures—that, as Squires et al. (1983) noted, "hard work is more important to success than luck."

- Staff and administrators believe every student can learn, and that every student can improve.
- Staff development activities that underscore the educability of all students are offered.
- Grouping practices and programs that identified some students as low achievers are modified or abandoned.
- Everyone in the school community knows the part they will play, and all are committed to improvement.
- The school provides opportunities for students to demonstrate responsibility.
- Teachers assign appropriately challenging homework, and expect students to complete it with a high level of success.

(Berliner 1979; Block 1983; Brookover & Lezotte 1979; Coleman 1966; Edmonds 1979; Good 1979; Lee County 1985; Levine 1983; McCormack-Larkin 1985; McKee & McKinney 1985; PDK 1980)

Expectations for Learning

In effective schools, the belief that all students can learn serves as "the foundation for school-wide policies and practices whose results are directly related to the desire for increased student achievement and improved positive self-concepts . . . Academic goals are clearly stated, and expected norms of achievement and progress for all subject areas and grade levels are defined. The belief that all students can learn most often becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy when the qualities present in well-taught and well-managed classrooms become school-wide characteristics" (Murphy 1982, in Lee County 1985). Teachers must believe they have the ability to teach their students what they need to know, and that all students can master the skills they teach (Smock 1986).

The landmark 1968 study, *Pygmalion in the Classroom*, by Rosenthal and Jacobsen, demonstrated that when teachers had low expectations, even of high achieving children, those expectations became a self-fulfilling prophecy and the students performed poorly. While it is necessary and appropriate to recognize differences, and have different expectations of high and low achieving students, "what remains inappropriate are expectations based on race, sex, cleanliness, appearance, participation in class, or English usage, rather than on sound educational judgment" (Eaker 1984, in Lee County 1985).

Effective principals are never content just to identify problems. Their diagnosis is always accompanied by the collegial offering of alternative ways to teach that particular content

--Ronald Edmonds.

In effective schools, teachers and principals verbally and behaviorally express the belief that all students can achieve regardless of socioeconomic status, race, or past performance (Miller et al. 1985). These schools have policies reflecting confidence in their students, expecting them to do well, and utilizing sound instructional practices which recognize students' individual needs (Lee County 1985).

Dynamite Ideas:

It's Up to You

Dalton Junior High School in Dalton, Georgia, uses a school motto to encourage character: "If It's to Be, It's Up to Me." Teachers have high expectations of their students and demonstrate it in their interactions with the students. Students are taught to analyze what they do and how it affects others. The school follows up with a Time-For-Self room and a self-referral policy for students.

Source: Heller and Montgomery, *Winning Ideas from Winning Schools: Recognizing Excellence*, 1989.

"Accelerated Schools" to Motivate Disadvantaged Students

Stanford professor Henry Levin studied current intervention models for educationally disadvantaged students, and found they reduced learning expectations of both the children and their educators. The low status of these programs, combined with their focus on endless repetition of material through drill and practice, bored students, made them feel inferior, and produced only modest results.

Levin's "Accelerated Schools" model, which has been adopted on a trial basis by a number of states, creates a learning atmosphere which is "characterized by high expectations and a high status for the participants." The curriculum is fast-paced, actively engages the child's interest, and requires extensive involvement by teachers and parents. Parents are also asked to set high educational expectations for their children, to encourage reading and to support their success.

Source: Levin, Henry M. "Accelerated Schools for Disadvantaged Students." *Educational Leadership*, March 1987.

5. FOCUSED PROGRAM OF INSTRUCTION

Instructional programs in effective schools focus on the achievement of clearly defined and displayed objectives. Commonly stressed is student acquisition of basic skills, particularly reading and math skills. Effective schools implement programs to help students with learning difficulties, and adapt their curriculum and instructional strategies to individual classroom needs (Levine & Stark 1981). Once basic skills are mastered, successful schools focus on higher order/critical thinking skills. The curriculum is well-planned and designed to provide continuity across grades and subjects.

- Goals of instruction are clear, agreed upon, and communicated to teachers, students, and parents.
- Systematic plans are developed to upgrade student proficiency in basic skills.
- Extra personnel and resources are allocated to combat student learning difficulties.
- Curriculum plans are coherent and coordinated among staff. Staff are familiar with instructional procedures and know what skills are to be taught.
- There is continuity of instruction across grades.
- Teachers re-teach priority course content until students demonstrate they have learned it.
- Teachers divide their classes into fewer, larger groups, utilizing objective criteria.
- Instructional activities are previewed; students are given clear written and verbal directions; key points of instructions are repeated; student understanding is checked.
- Homework is regularly assigned and graded.
- There is systematic development of higher order/critical thinking skills once basic skills are mastered.
- Classroom assessments of student performance match learning objectives.

(Behr 1981; Block 1983; Blumberg 1980; Brookover et al. 1979; Doherty 1981; Edmonds 1979; Jorgenson 1977; Leithwood 1982; McGowen 1979; Niedermeyer 1981; NY DOE 1974; NYC Board of Education 1979; PDK 1980; Sarason 1971; Spartz et al. 1977; Venezky & Winfield 1979; Walberg 1984; Weber 1971; Wilson 1981)

Clear Instructional Goals

Instructional programs in successful schools are straightforward, well-understood, and clearly articulated to everyone involved. At the elementary level, the program usually stresses the teaching of basic skills in reading, writing, and mathematics. Sleeter and Grant (1986) found that in effective schools instructional programs are designed to help students "understand the world around them and the circumstances in which they live." They note that content taught in effective schools serves to validate the perceptions and experiences of students, helping them develop the necessary conceptual tools and information bases to think constructively about their world.

Dynamite Ideas:

Broward County, Florida s Coalition of Essential Schools Project

The Coalition of Essential Schools is a partnership devoted to strengthening student learning by reforming school priorities and simplifying its structure. Embracing the nine principles of the Coalition of Essential Schools developed by Dr. Ted Sizer, teachers, students, parents, and administrators are restructuring the way schools operate. The program selects private and public schools nationwide to work with staff at Brown University translating the principles of the report into individually-tailored working models.

Progressing slowly with the philosophy that "less is more," the four Broward County Nova Schools spent three years preparing for implementation. Nova Middle School, for example, began with a steering committee, five teachers, and 100 students. Teachers and administrators went to workshops at Brown University to learn the principles. They wrote curriculum and formed cohesive, supportive work teams to carry through the Sizer philosophy.

Nova Middle School made a commitment to five of the nine principles described by Sizer in his book, *Horace's Compromise: The Dilemma of the American High School* (1984). These five principles are the driving force in the evolving program: personalization, student-as-worker, intellectual focus, mastery by exhibition, and collaboration. Decisions about issues relating to these principles were made using a participatory management approach allowing students, teachers, and administrators to work together on committees as equals.

Implementation of Coalition principles takes many forms. For example, three teachers might be assigned to work collaboratively on one course integrating art, English, and social studies. The objective is to integrate the disciplines, attending to basic skills and knowledge required to connect the three. Students develop higher order critical and creative thinking skills, independent study skills, and an ability to utilize resources outside the classroom. An inter-disciplinary approach, team teaching, individualized lessons, projects, research and an Essential Thinking Lab facilitate implementation.

As a result, students have learned to read, think and generalize in ways that go far beyond their peers of similar abilities. Faculties have grown along with students, with teachers becoming facilitators of learning more than disseminators of information. Daily conversations and collaboration have broken the isolation of teaching.

Source: *Restructuring Education: The Florida Experience.* DOE, 1988.

Dynamite Ideas:

Applying Basic Skills to Real Situations

Caloosa Elementary School in Cape Coral, Florida, implemented a program of school improvement utilizing the effective schools research as a foundation. Two areas of focus in the plan were ensuring students master basic skills, and challenging them with activities which were enriching as well as interesting. After several years of concentrated efforts to help students master the basics and bring up their standardized scores, Caloosa's teachers turned to the next challenge: the application of basic skills to "real life" situations. Within the school students and staff created their own city government, a postal system, a bank, a department store, a publishing company, and a restaurant. Students participating in these activities are able to reinforce their skills in a challenging and meaningful hands-on environment.

Visitors to the school can dine in a dimly-lit cafe where potted plants and classical music provide ambiance and where you will be seated by a student maitre d'. The student bank has everything but real money. Students make deposits, write checks, balance accounts, and hold a variety of positions from teller to chairperson of the board. There are four postal "zones" in the school served by the school's own postal service, and students correspond with each other, school staff, and local retired teachers. Students run for "mayoral" positions in each of the school's four districts, and are voted on by their peers, who use computer-generated registration cards. There is actual campaigning, with posters, speeches, and TV spots generated and produced on school grounds and shown on the school's closed-circuit system.

Source: Lutz et al. "The Caloosa School: A Model for Success." *Principal.* March 1987.

Teaching What Students Need

Successful schools focus on teaching students the knowledge and skills they need to function once they are out of school. These areas are simple, clearly defined, and reinforced at all levels. Students must demonstrate mastery of skills before they move on, and are given the time, attention, and resources they need to achieve their goals. Teachers present instruction in a coherent, effective manner in which objectives are presented, demonstrated, and practiced by students until learned.

Henry Levin (1987) cautions that "simply raising standards without making it possible for disadvantaged students to meet them is more likely to increase their dropout rate than to improve their education." Successful teachers have the skill and flexibility to adapt instructional programs to fit the needs of individual classes and students. The program of instruction is coordinated and designed to follow students as they advance through school. Continuous assessment of both student progress and program applicability allows teachers to see the program's effectiveness, and to identify areas requiring improvement. "A planned curriculum, appropriate to student needs, is the basis for classroom planning, providing instruction and evaluating student learning" (Lee County 1985).

Research indicates a positive correlation between effective schools and the regular assignment of appropriately challenging homework. The relation is true across class and racial boundaries. Walberg (1984) found that "homework that is graded and commented upon has

Dynamite Ideas:

Computer-Enhanced Curriculum

Schools in Robeson County, North Carolina use innovative computer instructional programs to teach both basic and advanced math and English to their students. Rex Rennert School and St. Pauls Middle School use the **CCC (Computer Curriculum Corporation)** program with students from Kindergarten through the eighth grade. Federally funded through Chapter 1, the CCC program is designed to help at-risk students enhance basic and higher order skills in reading and math. Students visit the school's computer lab a minimum of five times a week for 45 minute periods. The students work on their own individual academic levels as ascertained by the initial placement mode program of the computer. A certified and highly trained teacher coordinates the program along with the collaborative efforts of the students' regular classroom teachers.

At Red Springs Middle School, at-risk fifth and sixth graders participate in the **HOTS (Higher Order Thinking Skills)** program. Developed by Stanley Pogrow of the University of Arizona, the HOTS program uses computers along with teacher-directed, Socratic dialogue and drama to teach students higher order thinking skills. These skills are reinforced and used by the students' regular classroom teachers to ensure mastery and integration in all academic areas.

three times the effect of (i.e., thrice more predictive of learning than) socioeconomic status." Stated another way, Walberg says that doing lots of homework is much more effective, for all children, than not doing it.

In *Design for Effective Schools in Lee County* (1985), the authors provide a description of effective teacher planning practices that is worth quoting in detail:

> Planning involves the selection, management and evaluation of instructional materials which will be used to help introduce, reinforce, or expand student understanding of the content. Effective use of materials involves knowledge of the materials plus preparation and arrangement of the materials. The materials must be ready, available, and easy to use. The appropriateness of materials is evaluated by considering the learners in the class, the format of the class, the content covered, and the time allotted for instruction.

South Carolina has formed a curriculum Congress to examine present state curricula and make recommendations for new and progressive curriculum frameworks. See Section III.

6. COLLABORATIVE DECISION MAKING

Comprehensive school improvement involves the entire school structure, so principals, teachers, advisory committees, teachers' unions, parents, and students should participate to some degree in the planning and decision-making process. As Thomas Sergiovanni and John Moore write in *Schooling for Tomorrow* (1989), "the model of an individual who unilaterally 'runs' a school no longer works very well." Schools wanting to improve recognize this and develop many kinds of leadership among the school community. Teachers, for example, are the critical component in the delivery of instruction in a school, so their input in decisions involving curricula is vital.

- Teachers, parents, unions, committees, and students with a stake in the decision-making process are more committed to school improvement, and more supportive of improvement plans they help develop.
- Sharing responsibility reduces the load on any individual, so that the departure or failure of one person does not result in disruption of improvement efforts.
- Barriers between principals, teachers, unions and parents are broken down as leadership and responsibility are shared.
- Teachers relate more directly and frequently with one another through their roles as committee members and coordinators.
- Principals delegate responsibilities and spend more time with instruction-related activities.
- New ideas and different opinions are voiced through shared decision-making.

(Armor et al. 1976; Berman & McLaughlin 1977; Deal et al. 1977; Glenn 1981; Hargrove et al. 1981; Little 1981; NY DOE 1974; Purkey & Smith 1983; Sergiovanni & Moore 1989; Trisman et al. 1976)

COOPERATION

Cooperation is a key ingredient at successful schools. The challenge and scope of comprehensive school improvement demand teamwork to be effective. From their review of school effectiveness studies conducted in 35 states, Bancroft and Lezotte (1982) concluded that establishing a school-based improvement team composed of teachers, administrators, and parents accelerates school improvement. Administrators in effective schools seem to have relinquished the notion that coordination requires rigid control from the top down. Teachers who work with these administrators recognize and support the need for coordination and acknowledge that they should no longer function as independent agents in their classrooms. These role perceptions provide the framework in effective schools for the school-based teams which cooperatively manage school improvement planning and implementation.

Dynamite Ideas:

Dade County—School-Based Management/Shared Decision Making (SBM/SDM)

Begun in 1987 as a pilot project designed to attract and retain good teachers, SBM/SDM has given Dade County, Florida schools the option of developing unique, self-tailored approaches to education. Charged to "change attitudes, to dream, take risks, imagine, trust, and be accountable," participants received training to learn the skills and procedures that make shared decision-making work.

Decision-making is decentralized from the district to the school level, and schools have unprecedented control over how funds are spent, staff is allocated and instruction is organized. The district encourages schools to break old molds and create new opportunities. Principals, staffs and teachers join together to solve problems and develop new and creative projects to meet the needs of students. Many aspects of schools have been redesigned, including types of textbooks used, structure of the school day, delivery of Spanish instruction, and the way in which teachers are hired.

The success of the initiative is clearly a product of cooperation at many levels. The school board and union, for example, agreed at the outset to waive district regulations and labor contract provisions standing in the way of individual school improvement. With regulatory control reduced, teachers have been more inclined to devote time and energy to shaping their work environments.

Dade's SBM/SDM schools receive the same funds as non-SBM/SDM schools. SBM/SDM schools do not report to area superintendents, but are organized into "feeder patterns" of elementary, middle, and high schools with one "lead" principal. Participating teachers report greater satisfaction with their profession, and their schools are experiencing significant improvements in student achievement, discipline, and curriculum and lesson planning.

The School Council Assistance Project

Since 1978, all schools in South Carolina have been required to establish school advisory committees. With the 1984 passage of the landmark Education Improvement Act, the councils were re-named and took on new responsibilities. The new School Improvement Councils serve as advisory committees to school principals, and their purpose is to help improve the quality of education at the local level. Councils collaborate with school staff and administrators to assess school needs, develop and implement a three-year school improvement plan, and monitor and evaluate success in reaching plan goals and objectives.

Council membership must include,

Two teachers elected by the faculty,
Two parents elected by the community,
Two students elected by their peers (high school), and
Other members to represent the larger community.

Continued . . .

But there are additional ways in which parents, teachers and students can get involved with school councils. An example of student involvement in school improvement takes place at Manning High School. Ten percent of the student body--100 students--serve as the "Committee of 100," where they play an active part as a resource and feedback mechanism to the formal School Improvement Council. According to Principal John Bassard, the students brought a fresh perspective to the Council, and "provided us with a broader base of information and ideas that has helped make our school even better."

Source: South Carolina SCAP, *'TIPS' from School Improvement Training Conference,* 1986.

The School Council Assistance Project was created in 1978 to provide support to school improvement councils, and today provides a wide range of services to School Improvement Councils. Located at the University of South Carolina College of Education, the Project offers workshops, training programs, video and print resources and technical assistance. The Project also conducts research on school improvement council issues. For more information, contact:

The School Council Assistance Project
College of Education, University of South Carolina
Columbia, SC 29208 Phone 803-777-7658

7. INDIVIDUAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Comprehensive improvement in schools requires altering peoples' attitudes and behaviors as well as providing them with new skills and techniques. In order to influence an entire school, **development should be focused directly on school goals and should be school-wide rather than specific to individual teachers or subjects**. Staff development is guided by the goals of the school as expressed in the school's improvement plan, and is closely related to the instructional program. Staff development plans should be based on the expressed needs of teachers revealed as part of the process of collaborative planning and collegial relationships (Armor et al. 1978; California DOE 1980; Glenn 1981; Levine & Stark 1981; Venezky & Winfield 1979, in Purkey & Smith 1983).

While the effective schools research does not enumerate indicators of staff development, there are six common components of most staff development plans, as exemplified by a successful program at Eastern Michigan University:

- Awareness, Readiness, Commitment—presentation to school staff; vote on commitment to participate; election of staff development planning committee or team.
- Interactive Needs Assessment—performed by planning committee or team.
- The Plan and Its Approval—development of project plan by planning committee; approval of plan by local policy board.
- Implementation of plan by school staff.
- Reporting and Evaluation.
- Adoption—interactive assessment of needs; completion or adoption of it as ongoing by school staff.

Source: National Center on Teaching and Learning, Eastern Michigan University.

School-wide Professional Development

Effective schools employ what Fullan (1990) terms "institutional development," as opposed to individual training. Professional development plans in such schools are designed around school improvement goals. Therefore, changes in effective schools are institutional, and bring increased capacity and performance for continuous improvement. Finding that every effective school in their study employed active staff development, Levine and Stark (1981) reported that the "intensive and ongoing emphasis" on staff development in these schools was "virtually a defining characteristic of their mode of functioning." The *Phi Delta Kappan* report (1980) on exemplary urban elementary schools noted that training was most effective when it was "targeted toward specific school or program goals." Research by Vallina (1978) reached a similar conclusion, finding that principals in successful schools gave priority to classroom carryover from inservice training.

At Brookwood High School in Snellville, Georgia, the school sponsors an annual Staff Development Night and invites noted speakers to challenge and motivate the school faculty (Heller and Montgomery, 1989).

Since the beneficial effects of targeted staff development are not in dispute, it is instructive to examine some specific staff development plans in the region which may serve as models for other districts. As with the shared decision-making models described in the previous section, many districts have gone well beyond effective school models in their restructuring efforts.

Dynamite Ideas:

Foundation for Development

Schools in Tupelo County, Mississippi have received the largest gift from a private individual in the history of public education, and plan to use the funds to establish a foundation for teacher development and restructuring for shared decision-making. The owner of Hancock Fibers gave $3.5 million to Tupelo County schools, and the district plans to establish a Learning Institute and a new developmental arm to established programs. Says Superintendent Mike Walters, "We have between 400 and 450 teachers and we plan to spend $1 million a year on teacher development."

Teachers will be encouraged to learn and apply state-of-the-art pedagogy, and the district will pay for teachers to travel to national conferences and conduct sabbaticals to improve their teaching and instruction. In addition, teachers will be given leadership and management training, and Superintendent Walters envisions that teachers will "restructure the district based on their professional development." The district is also contributing to the program.

And what prompted a multi-millionaire to give such a sum to a small school district? "We asked him to," says Walters.

The Dade Academy for the Teaching Arts (DATA)

Established in August 1987 as a joint project of the Dade County, Florida Public Schools Bureau of Professionalization and the United Teachers of Dade, DATA is designed to stimulate professional growth among experienced teachers. A nine-week program of seminars and clinics run, planned and operated exclusively by and for teachers, An outgrowth of the movement to professionalize teaching in the county, DATA enables teachers to conduct research projects, develop teaching units, and share teaching strategies to stimulate growth and personal creativity.

DATA operates within the context of the Dade County Public Schools and is housed in two trailers at Miami Beach Senior High School (MBSHS). Ten "resident" teachers--experts in their respective disciplines--are imported to DATA from various public schools in the county to serve as facilitators and mentors to DATA participants. Resident teachers also act as part of the MBSHS faculty; they teach high school classes for three periods each day and serve as liaisons from DATA. More than just teaching well, residents must be able to break down the teaching experience in order to explain it and act as mentors to the twenty teachers known as "externs" who participate each nine weeks. The externs conduct research projects, develop teaching plans, trade teaching strategies, and become computer literate.

A cadre of carefully selected exemplary teachers known as "adjuncts" replaces the extern teachers at their school sites. Five days of the nine-week period are devoted to maximizing articulation between the DATA extern and adjunct teachers. Because DATA is not operated as a separate entity, but meshes with the MBSHS staff, all faculty are invited to attend DATA workshops and seminars as their schedules permit. DATA professional resources are also shared whenever possible.

8. ORDER AND DISCIPLINE

Schools and classrooms which are orderly, clean, friendly, and democratic result in high achievement. **Effective schools have clear, firm, and consistent rules of conduct which are published and taught to every student.** Teachers and students care about their school's appearance, and participate in keeping it clean and neat.

- Discipline is clear, firm, and consistently enforced.
- A written code of conduct specifies acceptable student behavior, discipline procedures and consequences.
- Students, parents and staff know the rules. Students and staff receive initial training and periodic review of key features.
- The code of conduct is developed by the staff, who are committed to enforcing it.
- Teachers maintain classroom discipline without threatening or resorting to physical enforcement.
- Students feel safe from dangers which could distract them from learning.
- Rules are perceived as fair, even when not uniformly popular.
- The focus is on positive reinforcement of good behavior.
- School facilities are kept clean and made reasonably attractive.
- Damage and acts of vandalism are attended to immediately.

(Brookover 1979; California SDE 1977; Crocker et al. 1977; Datta et al. 1976; Larkin 1985; Madden 1976; Michigan SDE 1974; New York SDE 1974; Rutter 1979; Stallings 1981; Thompson 1967; Tikunoff et al. 1981; U.S. DHEW 1978; Weber 1971)

Environment for Learning

Edmonds (1979, 1982) reported that a school must have an orderly, safe, clean, and otherwise pleasant environment for effective learning to take place. In effective schools there is an orderly, purposeful atmosphere which is free from the threat of physical harm. The climate is not oppressive and is conducive to teaching and learning (Edmonds & Lezotte 1982, in Smock 1986). Successful schools take stock of the physical and disciplinary situations at their schools, and faculty and staff work together to identify areas for improvement. A written code of conduct is produced based on this collaboration, and is distributed and explained to students and parents. Rules are taught—not merely announced. Together, effective schools have a positive atmosphere like the high achieving school described in a study conducted for the Maryland Department of Education (1978):

> The school gives an immediate impression that it is "being run," as opposed to "running." There is an air about the school that suggests it has a direction, a point of view, and an orientation. One of the things that immediately impresses the visitor is that there are very few children in the halls and those who are there seem to be going about their business in an orderly fashion. The halls tend to be clean and there is a general air about the building that it is being cared for. The bulletin boards are neatly done and reflect projects going on in the school.

Dynamite Ideas:

Uniform Policies

The disciplinary focus at Shiloh Middle School in Lithonia, Georgia is on helping students "develop self-control, self-respect and respect for others and their property." Teacher teams work to develop a Discipline Management Plan which applies to every classroom, thus establishing continuity. The school also has a "First Fight Offender" program, which offers counseling for students involved in first-time fights and gives them a forum to examine feelings about, and alternatives to, fighting.

Source: Heller and Montgomery, *Winning Ideas from Winning Schools: Recognizing Excellence*, 1989.

Pleasant Conditions for Learning

School age and size matter less than the commitment of the school population to maintaining and caring for the school facility (Edmonds 1979). Successful schools promote a positive physical appearance and involve both students and staff in decorating and landscaping. When student work decorates hallways and doors, students recognize that what they do is valuable, and are less prone to committing acts of vandalism. Furthermore, when students hold positions of responsibility in the school setting, they are more likely to feel that the school "belongs to them," and discipline problems decrease (AEL 1986).

Battling Drugs and Low Esteem

When Jeff Miller took over as Principal of W.R. Thomas Jr. High in Miami, drugs were a real problem in and around the school, and unkempt school grounds reflected the low priority on school image and pride. Miller's first priorities were restoring order and pride in the school. Students facing suspension were given the option of working to improve school grounds. Funds were shifted to enhance landscaping, and school service clubs were required to perform school or community service. These initiatives made the school a much more attractive place for learning, and students felt pride and ownership in their service roles. In addition, those facing suspension were able to prove themselves in a positive alternative to out-of-school suspension.

A strong, clear, and consistently enforced code of conduct was established. Selected students served on "Tiger Patrols" in the halls before and between classes to increase student security and responsibility. Prevention and intervention classes were given to all students, teaching drug avoidance, latchkey coping skills, and dealing with abusers, addicts and alcoholism. The classes helped students, and also helped the school identify students who needed further intervention so they could be referred to outside agencies and treatment centers. Results of these policies include a 50 percent reduction in disruptive incidents, and no expulsions for two years in a row.

Dynamite Ideas:

Recognizing Good Behavior

Two schools in Anniston, Alabama, demonstrate how every school can and should respond to its unique needs and strengths, even when schools operate under the same system and guidelines.

10th Street Elementary School and Anniston Middle School conducted assessments at the end of the a recent school year, and both discovered that student discipline (or a lack thereof) was a problem which was interfering with teachers' efforts to teach. Using an established district approach, the two schools decided to address the discipline problems by placing an emphasis on recognizing appropriate behavior instead of devoting a great deal of energy to discipline and punishment. Each school found success in its own way.

At 10th Street Elementary, teachers teamed up to develop strategies and programs to address the discipline problems. A number of awards and other means of recognition were developed for students who displayed appropriate behavior and work habits, including field trips, outside play, parties, and certificates. A Student Hall of Fame was established with names and photographs of exemplary children; teachers made a point of recognizing good behaviors and giving out stickers or other small items; the principal made impromptu visits to classrooms and rewarded children. The program yielded a 52 percent reduction in discipline referrals.

Anniston Middle School's Assertive Discipline Plan also rewarded students for good behavior, giving them free homework coupons, and getting a local bank to donate savings bonds to students. Anniston Middle also rewarded students with field trips, and used its cluster structure as a way to further recognize good students. The 1,100-student school is divided into nine clusters; each of which is almost like an independent school where students stay together and with the same teachers all year long. Under this arrangement, says Principal Jackie Sparks, "Each child gets more recognition. Somehow, some way each student is going to be recognized" every day. Clusters have their own individual newspapers, and each issue contains the name of every student in the respective cluster. Parents are divided into corresponding Parent Cluster Support Groups, further helping to provide additional attention to students who need it.

9. MAXIMIZED LEARNING TIME

"How teachers manage available classroom time is more important than the actual number of minutes allocated for instruction" (Block 1983). In a nationwide survey involving more than 600 variables, "engaged time" (the number of minutes that students spend actively involved in specific subject matter) showed the single strongest relationship to student achievement (Stallings & Kaskowitz 1974). Effective schools employ many strategies to enhance classroom learning time and protect it from excessive disruption.

- Classes start and end on time.
- Interruptions are avoided—general announcements are limited to non-instructional time.
- Transition time between classes and activities is reduced.
- Teachers provide specific objectives and immediate feedback.
- Teachers budget time accurately so that students spend more time on task.
- Student pull-outs are minimized.
- Absentee rates are lower for both students and teachers.
- Class time is structured to focus on content.
- Teachers foresee difficulties and adapt instruction to students' abilities.

(Block 1983; Brookover et al. 1982; Lee County 1985; Purkey & Smith 1983; Spartz et al. 1977; Squires et al. 1981)

Time on Task

In effective schools, teachers spend more time actively teaching, give less "busy work" to students, and generate more learning-related activities (Brookover 1977; Brundage 1980; California SDE 1978; & Spartz et al. 1977, in Block 1983). Classes start quickly and purposefully, and teachers have assignments, materials and supplies ready for students when they arrive. Teachers "structure class time and learning experiences to focus on content through a variety of instructional experiences. These experiences are planned carefully and presented with clarity. The teacher leads or directs the instruction but provides interaction opportunities (Brophy 1983). Practice activities are related directly to the content and structured so that students experience success with meaningful tasks (Berliner 1982; Purkey & Smith 1983). Group learning activities are varied, purposeful and ordered. Materials are appropriate for the learning task, organized, and easily used. Procedures for class participation and practice work are well defined.

"Effective teachers monitor group and individual work to reduce off-task activities and misconduct. Off-task activities are limited by efficient pacing and smooth transitions. Student movement during activities is minimized. Seatwork is limited, and assistance is readily available from the teacher or other designated helpers. Feedback and reinforcement for correct responses are specific and frequent (Brookover et al. 1982). Assignments are planned to be challenging but not impossible or frustrating. Students are encouraged to continue working since they know that the teacher has planned classwork so that it can be completed. The level of difficulty of tasks is varied" (Lee County 1985). Finally, the principal and teachers plan to minimize class disruption by scheduling appropriately.

Dynamite Ideas:

Restructuring for Maximized Learning

Bolton Middle School (West Linn, Oregon) has made systematic efforts to reduce disruptions of instructional time. There is a daily seven-hour instructional day (longer than the high school) with the only non-instructional time being 30 minutes for lunch/recess and 11 minutes for a midmorning break. This schedule (with seven periods of 46 minutes) was developed by a staff committee trying to maximize academic learning time. Whenever there are school assemblies, the school uses an "X" schedule—classes meet, each losing about five minutes. In this way, students do not miss a class in exchange for an assembly. The school no longer takes lunch counts—instead the food service estimates. Requests to see students are sent directly to teachers, and in them teachers are asked to send students between classes, at break, lunch, or after school. Daily bulletin announcements are limited to the beginning of second period. Students are not dismissed early to travel to athletic games. Additionally, teachers receive feedback from the principal regarding at-task and academic learning time data in the classroom.

Source: Wilson, Bruce L., *Places Where Children Succeed.* Philadelphia: 1987.

10. PARENT/COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Research suggests that the key to successful parent participation is parent-initiated involvement, as opposed to parents getting involved only when notified about a problem with their children. Parents of students in effective schools are concerned about their children's schoolwork and school.

Schools which are successful in improving achievement actively encourage and assist parents to help their children master essential skills, particularly with regard to homework. Effective schools welcome parents and meet with them often, providing parents with various options for becoming involved in schooling—especially in ways that support the instructional program (Armour 1976; Block 1983; Brookover et al. 1979; California SDE 1977; Cotton 1980; Edmonds & Frederiksen 1979; Fetters et al. 1968; Fisher et al. 1980; Gigliotti & Brookover 1975. Levine & Stark 1981; New York SDE 1974; Wilson 1981).

- The mission and goals of the school are communicated regularly to parents.
- Parents are well-informed of school policies and rules.
- Opportunities for involvement are diverse, and communicated clearly to parents.
- Schools provide guidance to parents on helping their children master essential skills.
- Schools are open to use by the community.
- There are active parent-teacher groups, volunteer programs, and/or parent education programs.
- Parents and members of the community play a role in making school decisions.
- Parent satisfaction with their childrens' school and schooling is high.

(Armour 1976; Brookover et al. 1979, 1982; California SDE 1977; Cotton 1980; Lee County 1985; Levine & Stark 1981; Lezotte 1982; New York SDE 1974; PDK 1980; Walberg 1984; Wilson 1981)

Parents as Partners

Effective schools develop and maintain a positive relationship between themselves and parents (Block 1983). They recognize that students spend the majority of their time away from school, and appreciate the great influence parents have on them. Herbert Walberg (1984) calculated that the twelve years of 180 six-hour days children spend in elementary and secondary schools add up to only "13 percent of the waking, potentially-educative time during the first 18 years of life." Effective schools communicate school goals to parents so that parents may understand and support the mission of learning and teaching at the school.

Doing regular, appropriately challenging homework improves performance, and successful schools encourage parents to make sure students do their assignments by suggesting such strategies as providing a quiet place to study away from a television, setting aside a regular time for study and asking about schoolwork. Such schools assist parents to teach their children at home.

Effective schools make parents feel welcome, and the range of ways in which parents can participate is limited only by

Dynamite Ideas:

Making Parents Feel Welcome

Murray County Schools in Georgia have developed Family Support Teams for the parents of at-risk pre-schoolers. The goals of the program are to enhance parents' ability to enrich their children's learning environment, to foster in parents a positive attitude toward school, to improve the children's language development and raise the percentage of students who are promoted to First Grade. Each family support team works with ten families, using a schedule of alternating home visits and school workshops. Activities have been developed to occupy and engage the children during the home visits and workshops, and the visits and workshops continue throughout kindergarten.

Teachers at **Stemley Road Elementary in Alabama** are rearranging their schedules to meet with parents, instead of the other way around. In addition, if parents cannot make it to the school, the teachers will go to the children's homes to meet with the parents. Every classroom in the school has a mailbox outside the door, used by students and teachers for regular correspondence within the school. Adapting the mailboxes to parent involvement, the teachers place notes about ways in which visiting parents can volunteer in their classrooms. When the red flag on the box is up, the teacher welcomes parents to come into the classroom to help out.

their initiative and commitment:

- As members of advisory committees helping to formulate school mission and goals.
- As members of school shared decision-making teams.
- As volunteers on various school projects and functions.
- As tutors or guest lecturers at the school.
- By taking over classes for inservice days.
- By taking training in how to read to or teach their children.
- By holding the same high expectations for their children as does the school.
- By visiting the school and getting to know teachers and administrators.
- By familiarizing themselves with the school's improvement program.
- By working with the school to achieve agreed-on goals.

Two-Way Communication

Lee County's school improvement plan (1985) stresses the importance of communication for involving parents and members of the community in what it terms "successful collaborative efforts aimed at forwarding the school's mission." Parents who are actively involved in creating and implementing school improvement will be more committed to school goals. Effective schools communicate with parents in many ways, through handbooks on school mission and rules, letters, newsletters, surveys, meetings, and phone calls. School programs are reported to the media, and some schools have a news-liaison member on the staff who is in charge of contacting media about events at the school.

Effective schools make special efforts to include parents in school life, and provide ways for them to participate, including:

- Inviting parents to serve on school advisory committees and have a voice in school decisions.
- Holding regular, informal discussions where parents and students are

invited to express their concerns to school officials.

- Encouraging an active parents' group.
- Offering classes for parents on how to teach or read to their children.
- Providing a room in the school for use by parents.
- Allowing parents to walk through the building.
- Making periodic visits to pupils' homes.
- Holding regular parent conferences.
- Providing transportation for parents to school meetings.
- Adjusting hours to meet with working and single parents.

The task of teaching children what they need to know to function effectively in society is the responsibility of parents as well as teachers. When parents, schools, and the community work together as partners to foster student learning, the combined efforts result in greater teacher, parent, and student satisfaction, and help lead to better achievement.

Dynamite Ideas:

Florida's Red Carpet Schools

The Florida Commissioner of Education is conducting a Family Involvement Campaign to raise public awareness of the importance of family involvement in the success of a child's education. A major component of the campaign is the Red Carpet Schools program, which recognizes schools that welcome parents, and serves as a framework for schools which need to work on family involvement. "Being a Red Carpet School is synonymous with being 'parent friendly,' with a welcoming atmosphere and plenty of opportunities for families to get involved," says Commissioner Betty Castor.

Schools must be nominated for the Red Carpet honor by a parent group such as a School Advisory Committee or Parent/Teacher organization. Nominated schools must meet specific criteria which include conducting a survey of parent attitudes, opening school facilities for community use, providing opportunities for parent education, including parents in school decisions and providing opportunities for family involvement in the learning process.

Schools are judged by a DOE subcommittee which reviews involvement policies and interviews school personnel. The subcommittee then awards the designation, or makes further suggestions for improvement so that schools can reach designation status. Successful schools receive a congratulatory letter, a Red Carpet floor mat, a certificate and a decal. Most schools conduct a special announcement or celebration ceremony, and the Commissioner has attended many ceremonies. So far, over 1,200 schools have received the Red Carpet Schools designation.

11. INCENTIVES/REWARDS FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Excellence in achievement and behavior is recognized. Requirements for awards are clear, with evaluations based on standards rather than on comparisons with peers. Awards are set at different levels of performance so that all students will have opportunities for success and recognition. Teacher excellence is also recognized, with student achievement an important criterion for success. Both formal and informal recognition are used, and at least some awards are given publicly.

- Success by students and teachers is recognized.
- Rewards are given for both academic and non-academic achievement.
- Rewards are given both formally and informally.
- Standards for rewards are explicit, and most rewards are not competitive but rather based on achievement of standards.
- Parents and news media are notified of student success.
- Rewards serve as incentives for achievement.

(Brophy 1980; Emmer 1981; Evertson 1981; Hunter 1977; Rosswork 1977; Rutter 1979; Walker 1976)

Value of Rewards

Recognition and rewards serve several purposes in effective schools. They acknowledge demonstrated achievement, provide incentives for success, raise student self-worth and morale, promote school spirit and cohesiveness, and teach children that they have significant control over their success. Successful schools give awards frequently, but always base them on achievement of established criteria so they will not become so common as to lose their incentive. Awards are given not only for good grades, but in many **areas so that every student in the school has the opportunity to be rewarded for success.**

Recognition is given both formally and informally in effective schools. Methods of formal recognition include assemblies, intercom announcements, letters to parents, write-ups in local and school newspapers, television reports, and through awards. Formal awards range from certificates, medals, field trips, prizes, and passes and discounts to local businesses and events, to special school privileges. Informal recognition is also very important, and Brookover (1979) found that in effective schools, "student success is built into lessons, and teachers provide consistent rewards for demonstrated achievement." In effective schools, rewards serve both as daily and long-term incentives and boosters of morale.

Dynamite Ideas:

Suwannee High School's PAP
Positive Action Program

When new principal Alan Graham arrived at Suwannee High School in Live Oak, Florida, he invited teachers and students to speak with him and share their opinions and concerns. One student, a rising senior whose grades were mediocre, told Graham one reason school did not mean much to him was that in eleven years he had never received a single award. Asked to name an area in which he deserved recognition, the student replied that he was rarely absent and had never been late for a class in high school.

Graham instituted Suwannee's Positive Action Program, or PAP, to recognize this type of achievement as well as exemplary academic and athletic performance. Under PAP guidelines, students accrue points through numerous behaviors and activities: high attendance, punctuality, good conduct, making the honor roll, community service, most improvement, etc. To encourage responsibility, the students must take the initiative to identify where they wish to be recognized, and have their teachers and parents "sign off" affirming their success in respective areas. The award for Most Improved Student cannot go to someone already on the honor roll. Instead it recognizes the efforts of kids who are not normally rewarded. Various point amounts are given for different activities, and students earn awards and prizes based on their total points.

Students are recognized in many ways, some of which are quite creative. There is a quarterly assembly where PAP students are announced, a PAP bulletin board lists PAP winners (there is a contest to design the bulletin board—the winner gets PAP points, as does the designer of a PAP bumper sticker), and parents are notified of PAP winners. As students earn more points they can choose from a variety of rewards: they can earn special parking privileges close to the building, underclass students can leave the campus for lunch (this is very popular—normally only seniors have this right), and the highest scorers can opt out of a nine-week's test. There are other, surprise awards and assemblies, as well as special dances and field days for PAP winners. Over a third of the student body participates in the program.

12. CAREFUL & CONTINUOUS EVALUATION

Student achievement, and overall school improvement efforts are monitored carefully and frequently. Progress is noted and made public. Activities are modified and refined as necessary to improve performance and the instructional program (Block 1983; Edmonds 1979; Purkey & Smith 1983; Squires et al. 1983; Weber 1971).

- Assessments are coordinated: classroom, school, and district efforts mesh.
- Assessments match learning objectives.
- Periodic reports are made to the community.
- Alignment between assessments and curriculum is checked and improved systematically.
- Multiple assessments are used: norm- and criterion-referenced tests, teacher and school-designed tests, portfolios, surveys of teacher, student, and parent attitudes.
- Students are given preparation and practice in test-taking.

(Block 1983; Edmonds 1979; Lee County 1985; McCormack-Larkin 1985; Purkey & Smith 1983; Squires et al. 1983 Weber 1971)

The Measure of Success

"In effective schools, students are able to demonstrate that they have learned what the school wanted them to learn" (Lezotte 1984). Frequent monitoring of improvement efforts is essential to the development and maintenance of an effective learning climate. School improvement programs are gauged in many ways: surveys of teachers, parents, and students measure level of satisfaction with progress; conferences offer opportunity to express feelings about efforts; and, multiple methods of assessment are used to quantify changes in performance. Effective schools systematically assess student achievement by using nationally validated measures, criterion-referenced measures, standardized tests, and locally generated curriculum-based measures.

"Evaluation . . . should take many forms - teacher observations, review of workbook and homework assignments, classroom quizzes and tests, oral questioning, computer games and quizzes, state student assessment tests and/or specified achievement tests. Frequent monitoring keeps students focused on appropriate tasks in learning and conveys the message that those tasks are important to master . . . Frequent monitoring of student progress requires an instructional management system (Lezotte 1984) . . . Simply stated, an instructional management system includes: (1) identifying what is to be taught, (2) presenting the material to students in an appropriate manner, (3) assessing students' learning of the material, and (4) re-teaching, if needed, or moving to other material if achievement is satisfactory" (Lee County 1985).

Dynamite Ideas:

Multiple Assessment for Broadened Perspective

John F. Kennedy School in South Bend, Indiana, uses a full range of means to monitor the progress of students. Student progress is continuously monitored through a multiple-factor system by: (1) reviewing results of all test scores including the CTBS; (2) principal-teacher conferences; (3) Houghton-Mifflin Reading Management (Computer) System; (4) parent-teacher conferences; (5) team meetings; (6) team leader meetings; (7) classroom observations; (8) teacher records; and (9) individual Student Reading Progress Scores maintained in the principal's office. Student progress is also reported in the form of NCE growth scores, for the total school and for each student.

Authentic Assessment

West Oxford Elementary School in Oxford, North Carolina is in the process of implementing a school-wide restructuring program involving multi-aged and non-graded classrooms. To meet district and state accountability requirements, the school developed a pilot assessment instrument--Authentic Learning Assessment (ALA)--which will be administered to exiting students during the Spring. Each child will be "rated" according to a scale which reflects where that child is performing in relation to expected age level proficiency. Components include: portfolio, task performance, parent survey, and ratings of state math and communication skills assessment instruments.

Lezotte (1984) states, "You should be very sure that what gets measured are the things you care most about. What we find in most schools is that the only things they are measuring right now are cognitive things - reading, math, etc. But there are a whole host of other educational outcomes that we are interested in and that we work to teach to our students." Effective schools utilize multiple assessments to get the best and broadest picture of student achievement. In successful schools, assessments are designed to measure progress toward school mission and goals. And effective schools never forget that it is the use, not just the collection, of assessment data that is critical to school success. The school staff must not only administer tests, but also analyze the results and use them to improve their practice (Wilson 1987). Recently, Chester Finn made a noteworthy declaration of what the outputs of an effective school should be:

1. All students are learning.
2. All students, regardless of race, sex, or socioeconomic status, are learning and improving.
3. Students are happy and satisfied with their school and the education they are receiving.
4. Parents are happy and satisfied with their children's school and education.

In each case, Finn argues that these outputs must be demonstrated **through clear, objective evidence** (PDK 1990).

Section II

HOW DOES A SCHOOL INITIATE AND IMPLEMENT A SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLAN?

- Initiation
- Planning/Goal Setting
- Implementation
- Review
- Institutionalization

HOW DOES A SCHOOL INITIATE AND IMPLEMENT A SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLAN?

This section of the ***HOT TOPICS*** details steps and tools necessary for actually creating school improvement: organizing school improvement teams, developing action plans, and implementing and evaluating those plans to improve schools.

Several models for school improvement have been reviewed in developing this section. Different models may identify the steps with other names, but successful school improvement programs generally proceed through five stages: **initiation, planning/goal-setting, implementation, review,** and **institutionalization**.

INITIATION

The first stage of the change process is **initiation**. At this time a school improvement team is formed, its charge clarified, and there is some agreement on a shared vision of an improved school. The following is a list of tasks necessary to complete the initiation stage:

1. Form school improvement team
2. Clarify charge/Develop initial shared vision
3. Agree on planning process
4. Consider using an outside consultant

(Odden & Anderson 1986; Loucks-Horsley & Cox 1989; Harvey & Crandall 1988)

✓ **1. The School Improvement Team**

The success of a school improvement effort is directly related to the success of school teams in initiating, planning, implementing, reviewing and institutionalizing the program.

A typical school improvement team might include the following:

- principal and/or assistant principal
- department or grade-level chairpersons
- teacher representatives elected or selected by the faculty
- parent representatives/advisory committee members
- one or two students
- superintendent or a district-level administrator
- school board member
- business partners

The Role of the Team is to:

- provide leadership for all stages of school improvement efforts
- promote united efforts--a building-wide integration of attitudes, goals, policies, and procedures promoting learning
- help members and decision-makers enhance effectiveness
- collaborate in problem solving

According to *The Instructional Leadership Team* (AASA 1989), teams vary from site to site, but **all teams have some essential elements**. They:

- meet regularly (weekly, monthly, every six weeks)
- are of a workable size (depending on school and district size)
- work collaboratively for improvement
- have sufficient authority to make decisions affecting school improvement efforts

School teams bring together ideas and people to create and maintain effective improvement strategies. Each team member uses knowledge, skills, and attitudes to become a more effective decision-maker, spokesperson and change agent (AASA 1989).

✓ 2. Clarify Charge/Develop Initial Shared Vision

In this step the team clarifies in a general way what it wants to do. Members must consider:

- what kind of a roles they are willing to play
- their expectations
- the mission of the school and how well it is presently being accomplished

It is important for the school improvement team to develop a vision of what its improved school will look like. The team should:

- visit schools involved in school improvement
- create a slogan or motto to articulate the vision
- garner community and school support
- develop a sense of commitment to the improvement effort

✓ 3. Agree on a Planning Process

There are several planning models available. The school improvement team should consider options and select a model which is applicable and flexible enough to be adapted to individual school needs.

INFORMATION ON A NUMBER OF SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT AND PLANNING MODELS IS INCLUDED IN SECTION IV OF THIS HOT TOPICS.

✓ 4. Consider Using an Outside Consultant

Many larger districts have their own "consultants" who play the role of outside facilitator on special projects. In smaller districts and schools, the project may be handled by an "insider." Many districts use outside consultants on a regular basis, while others never do. Advantages of involving an outside consultant in the school improvement process include:

- focused attention and an unbiased opinion
- neutrality and fairness
- ability to balance power groups and mediate contentious issues

Potential disadvantages in involving an outside consultant include:

- high consultant fees
- varying reliability and willingness of consultant to spend adequate time at the school

Cautions in Initiating the Plan

School improvement teams should be cautious concerning the following:

- the amount of time dedicated to initiation
- conflicts with district or union policies
- trying to do everything all at once
- ignoring ongoing improvement efforts
- addressing real problems, not just symptoms
- compatibility with the rest of the curriculum

SEE APPENDIX D FOR A DESCRIPTION OF CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT COUNCILS.

SEE APPENDIX E FOR A DESCRIPTION OF THE ROLE OF THE PRINCIPAL ON SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT COUNCILS.

SEE APPENDIX F FOR A DESCRIPTION OF THE ROLE OF THE SCHOOL DISTRICT ON SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT COUNCILS.

PLANNING/GOAL SETTING

The second stage of the process is **planning/goal setting**. Planning should include the following steps:

1. Problem definition/needs assessment
2. Goal setting
3. Establishing criteria for the solution
4. Problem solving
5. Identifying resources and constraints
6. Drafting an Action Plan

✓ 1. Problem Definition/Needs Assessment

The first step in the planning/goal setting stage is to identify problems to be addressed in the school improvement effort. At this time a team collects data about school accomplishments and needs for improvement. Improvement teams might consider the following data sources to help them define problems and needs of their school, and the direction of their improvement efforts:

- classroom observations
- test scores
- parent, teacher, and student surveys (Harvey & Crandall 1988)

SEE APPENDIX A FOR A "QUICK PERCEPTION QUIZ" YOU CAN USE TO MEASURE ADMINISTRATOR, TEACHER, PARENT AND STUDENT SATISFACTION AT YOUR SCHOOL.

After collecting data, the team should:

- conduct a reliable and valid needs assessment
- analyze the results
- package results clearly and concisely
- disseminate results to faculty, staff, and others

SEE APPENDIX B FOR AN EXAMPLE OF A NEEDS ASSESSMENT SURVEY YOU CAN USE

An alternative strategy some schools have used is to start with a "strengths assessment" rather than reviewing needs. Identifying strengths and successes can infuse a degree of excitement into the improvement process (Loucks-Horsley & Hergert 1989).

Regardless of what process is used to assess the needs of the school, all researchers of school improvement agree on one thing; **DO NOT SPEND TOO MUCH TIME ON ASSESSMENT.** Assessment is not an end in itself, and is of no value unless acted upon.

SEE APPENDIX C FOR A SAMPLE PROBLEM STATEMENT YOU CAN USE TO IDENTIFY GOALS AND AREAS OF NEED.

✓ 2. Goal Setting

When the assessment process is complete, goals should be set. The goals of the school improvement effort should reflect what the school will look like after changes have been made. The following is an example of how to set goals:

Defining Goals and Expectations

Before setting any goals, ask yourself two questions:

1. What knowledge, attitude, or behavioral changes do I want to see achieved by whom?
2. What do I want my classroom, school, or district to look like when implementation is complete?

To clarify your answer to the second question, imagine you're hovering over your school in a helicopter. What you see is a close-to-ideal version of the new activity (for instance, use of microcomputers). Now ask yourself:

1. What is going on in the classroom?
2. How is the room organized?
3. What materials and equipment are available or in use?
4. Who is working with whom?

5. What are the teachers doing?

6. What are the students doing?

Source: *School Improvement: A Resource & Planning Guide.* Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 1988.

✓ **3. Establishing Criteria For the Solution**

Solutions will be varied and take different forms. They could be materials and equipment, communication procedures, training, inservice workshops, or any combination of these. Establishing criteria for selecting solutions helps the team:

- realize what is important to their vision
- establish standards for evaluating different options
- estimate costs
- understand how the solution fits with district philosophy and resources
- rate the possible solutions as to their value
- narrow choices
- de-select inappropriate solutions (Loucks-Horsley & Hergert 1989)

✓ **4. Problem Solving**

In this step the team selects specific solutions contributing to the shared vision of the school. It will be helpful to the success of the program if the school improvement effort is built upon already existing programs and practices at the school. As the team works on solutions to problems, it will have to decide whether to:

- replace a program or practice
- supplement something already in place
- provide training, or consider other options

(Loucks-Horsley & Hergert 1989)

✓ **5. Identifying Resources and Constraints**

A variety of resources, both internal and external, will be necessary to implement a school improvement plan. Those resources are most often in the form of technical assistance rather than funding. In identifying solutions, the school improvement team will need to:

- be aware of resources and the possible constraints on them
- understand budgets and budget categories
- possibly establish their own budget
- consider political realities of working with the school board and the community

They will also need to understand that not all resources are monetary. In school improvement efforts, one non-monetary resource which has been identified as extremely important is **time**--time for planning, for inservice, time to be released from normal responsibilities.

It is important to tie solutions to classroom practices (Loucks-Horsley & Hergert 1989). It should also be remembered that, at this point, the process is still developing and the team should be flexible enough to make changes as elements of the school improvement process are reconsidered.

✓ **6. Drafting an Action Plan**

After setting goals and completing a school self-assessment, the improvement team must devise a plan of action to implement positive change. Planning how a solution will be implemented is a critical council responsibility. The improvement team should be involved for several reasons:

- Implementation usually requires a series of detailed steps. Team members should all be aware of what steps are to be taken, why, and by whom.

- Improvement Teams are usually composed of "idea" people and "detail" people. This is definitely the time for the detail people to contribute their talents.

- It is easy for people in groups to assume someone else is taking the necessary steps to put group decisions into effect. Complete implementation planning requires all parties to take responsibility for clarifying exactly who is to accomplish the needed action.

- Planning may reveal flaws in solutions that require modification or consideration of alternatives by the Teams.

- State the measurable objective and/or purpose of the plan. Be as specific as possible. Include a beginning date and a target date for completion.

- List the assumptions the team is making in developing the plan—the things it believes to be true, but does not have full information on.

- List the tasks or action steps that will be taken to achieve the objective. If some must be taken in sequence, list them in order.

- Establish beginning and completion dates for each action.

- List the individual or individuals who will be responsible for seeing to it that the action is completed.

- List those whose support is required or who must be informed about an action.

- Identify the resources (money, personnel, time) that will be required to complete the plan.

- Identify the outcomes expected.

- Identify various means of documenting the activity and/or evaluating its effectiveness.

Source: Hansen 1989

This is the stage when the vision becomes reality. The team should begin to orchestrate and coordinate activities, strategies, and tactics at the school level. Implementation will give teachers opportunities to practice what they learn, give administrators chances to engage in planning, and help develop a common school improvement language. Steps in the implementation stage are:

1. Creating awareness for others
2. Training and staff development
3. Ongoing support
4. Self-assessment, coaching and feedback

✓ 1. Creating Awareness for Others

Once the school improvement team has chosen an improvement strategy, it should be communicated to others. The same questions asked by the team members during the initiation stage will have to be answered again for the rest of the faculty and staff. It would be a mistake to begin immediately with some kind of training without having the rest of the school "buy into" the plan. To gain support of the rest of the faculty and staff, the team may use:

- slide-tape shows
- open houses
- newsletters
- individual briefings

(Loucks-Horsley & Hergert 1989)

✓ 2. Training and Staff Development

FOR A FULL DISCUSSION OF TRAINING AND STAFF DEVELOPMENT, SEE SECTION I.

✓ 3. Ongoing Support (MBWA)

Individuals begin to acquire behaviors and skills which will play a major role in school improvement. As faculty and staff begin to utilize their training, ongoing support will be necessary. The improvement team can help by providing this support. Harvey & Crandall (1988) suggest using an approach termed "management by wandering around," or MBWA. If used correctly, MBWA can be one of the best tools available to school improvement leaders (Loucks-Horsley & Hergert 1989). Some of the things the team can be aware of as they do MBWA are:

- the use or non-use of new materials
- successful implementors
- those having trouble
- complaining or negative remarks
- logistical problems (space, equipment, etc.)
- classroom management problems

Team members should be diplomatic in their use of MBWA. Teachers will be having a difficult enough time dealing with changes taking place. It is important to be non-judgmental and supportive of teachers as they attempt to bring about change in the school.

✓ 4. Self-assessment, Coaching, and Feedback

The concepts of self-assessment and coaching involve the "guided practice" of new behaviors by the faculty as they begin to implement the school improvement process. Research shows that it has both pedagogical and psychological benefits. Self-assessment, coaching, and feedback can help teachers and staff:

- avoid developing poor, ineffective habits
- avoid the feeling of being alone in the change process
- acquire a sense of whether they are "on the right track" (Loucks-Horsley & Hergert 1989)

REVIEWING PROGRESS

It is important to review continually the progress of improvement efforts; identifying problems, strengths, successful implementors, and other factors critical to success of the plan. The steps of this stage of the school improvement process include:

1. Monitoring
2. Refining the program
3. Formative and summative evaluation

✓ 1. Monitoring

Though informal procedures like MBWA are important, it is necessary to carry out more formal monitoring activities. This will make the process more accountable. As improved academic achievement will be the cornerstone of any improvement effort, multiple assessments of performance should be utilized. In addition, questions about how people are adapting to the changes, what they are doing differently, their roles, and the process need to be asked.

One way to find out how people are feeling, and about their concerns about the program, is to have them write a response to open-ended questions about the school improvement process. This could be done in a few minutes at a meeting. There also might be a suggestion box.

SEE SECTION I FOR FURTHER INFORMATION ON WAYS TO MONITOR IMPROVEMENT EFFORTS.

✓ 2. Refining the Program

It is inevitable that any school improvement effort will encounter difficulties and require changes. If a particular idea does not work as intended, it will be necessary to make adjustments. Changes and refinements with new innovations should be carried out with caution, as elements of a program that fit in one classroom may be inappropriate in another. It will be the task of the school improvement team to keep up with how staff and faculty are implementing, and reacting to, components of the program.

✓ 3. Formative/Summative Evaluation and Outcomes

Understanding the hows and whys of program outcomes requires formative evaluation throughout the implementation of the project. Formative evaluation is ongoing during development of the program, and provides the improvement team with evaluation information useful in revising and fine tuning improvement efforts (Worthen & Sanders 1987).

Summative evaluation is conducted during the institutionalization stage. It indicates whether or not the school has realized its goals and desired outcomes, and provides parents, teachers, students, the community and others with judgements about the success of school improvement (Worthen & Sanders 1987).

It should be noted that the audiences for these two kinds of evaluations are different. With formative evaluation, the audience is program personnel involved in the school improvement effort. The audience for summative evaluation includes those other than the school improvement team. Summative evaluation should lead to decisions about the program, including:

- its value
- its continuation
- its expansion and dissemination (Worthen & Sanders 1987)

INSTITUTIONALIZATION

Institutionalization is the final stage in the school improvement process. It is where improvements become ingrained in the school. Institutionalization takes place when the program produces outcomes for teachers, administrators, and students. Real change in a school may take from three to five years to accomplish. Steps in this stage include:

1. Ongoing maintenance
2. Support
3. Staff commitment

✓ 1. Ongoing Maintenance

Often, little thought is given to ongoing maintenance of improvement programs. Unsuccessful programs usually just fade away, while successful ones often find it difficult to replicate their gains over time due to a lack of continued support, or to personnel turnover. Decisions should be made at school and district levels as to how the program will be continued. Ways to maintain improvement efforts include:

- providing a training program for new teachers
- rotating different people into the improvement team
- continuing adequate funding

Below is a checklist school improvement teams can use to help institutionalize a program:

QUILL Institutionalization Checklist

__ New staff receive training and orientation in the program.
__ We have follow-up sessions for current staff to maintain the use of the program.
__ The program is formally incorporated into curriculum plans.
__ We have written guidelines for the use of the program's materials and methods.
__ We purchase new materials and supplies in order to maintain the program's use.
__ Our budget includes a separate line item for the program.

Source: Loucks-Horsley & Hergert, *An Action Guide to School Improvement*, 1989.

✓ 2. Support

As early as the initiation stage, it is wise for a school to develop contact with someone who will become district advocate for the school's improvement effort. A school improvement program needs support of the:

- school board
- superintendent
- central office

It is during institutionalization that the project can be turned over to others in the system. In the beginning there may have been waivers of authority in order to get the project going. Now, as it is disseminated throughout the school or to other schools, project continuation will have to be directed by other administrators.

✓ 3. Staff Commitment

The school improvement team will have to be responsible for developing strategies for keeping the project on course and "alive." Once the program is in place, it is important to retain strong support. Someone at the school and district level should be responsible for maintaining enthusiasm. The team should:

- provide staff development to new staff
- offer continued training to faculty and staff
- foster active communication among participants
- provide recognition of successes and participation
- continue frequent planning and re-planning
- renew occasionally the commitment of all involved

CONCLUSION

In *An Action Guide To School Improvement* (1989), Loucks-Horsley & Hergert present beliefs about the school improvement process based on their experiences. Some beliefs appear to contradict general, conventional ideas about improving schools:

"**Acting** is better than **planning.**

The key to school improvement is not necessarily the principal.

Assuming ownership comes at the beginning of the project is false. It must be developed and built.

Continued support for faculty **after** initial training is critical.

Sometimes **coercion** is necessary.

Using other programs, already proven viable and cost-effective, may be preferable to developing major new initiatives."

Ideally, school improvement will be an ongoing process that continually renews itself and finds new areas in which to improve. Goals will expand and the vision of the school will be expanded. As changes take place, the school becomes a better place for all who are a part of it.

Section III

STATE-SPONSORED SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT EFFORTS

STATE-LEVEL SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT INITIATIVES

Each of the states in the SERVE region (Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina and South Carolina) is encouraging or requiring school improvement initiatives. While these state efforts vary considerably in their stages of development, approach, levels of support and scope, there are common components which reflect regional and national trends in education in the areas of:

- school improvement,
- restructuring,
- accountability,
- accreditation,
- district/school reporting,
- granting waivers of restrictive regulations and/or legislation, and
- strategies for addressing national goals for education.

Budget shortfalls and cutbacks throughout the region are having significant and sometimes deleterious effects on some state improvement efforts, as programs are trimmed back and educational staff face layoffs and hiring freezes. This section of the *Hot Topics* provides an overview of presently planned/operating, state-sponsored improvement efforts in the region. It is by no means a comprehensive listing of all programs, however, and several states are still in the early stages of their efforts.

Note: The following information is based almost entirely on publications, unpublished documents and other materials supplied by the State Departments of Education in the SERVE region. For the sake of accuracy, many lists and descriptions are close paraphrases or exact quotations.

ALABAMA

On March 14, 1991, the Alabama State Board of Education adopted a set of "Goals for Educational Improvement." Expanding on the National Goals for Education adopted by the President and state governors in 1988, the Alabama goals establish benchmarks for education in the state, and contain the following components:

GOAL 1: ALL CHILDREN WILL BE READY TO LEARN WHEN THEY ENTER FIRST GRADE

A. Expand preschool programs
B. Improve the kindergarten program
C. Provide early intervention service
D. Maintain the state-level Interagency Coordinating Council

GOAL 2: ALL CHILDREN WILL HAVE EQUAL EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY

A. Provide equitable funding for all students
B. Increase emphasis on mathematics, science and geography
C. Use technology to promote equal opportunities by improving the efficiency and effectiveness of administrators
D. Increase emphasis on music and art
E. Strengthen programs to assist at-risk students
F. Provide adequate facilities

GOAL 3: ALL CHILDREN WILL RECEIVE EFFECTIVE INSTRUCTION

A. Implement the Performance-Based Accreditation System
B. Extend the number of days students attend school and the number of teacher contract days per year
C. Provide parental choice options
D. Implement the Professional Education Personnel Evaluation System
E. Provide a thorough system of professional development
F. Strengthen teacher recruitment/training programs
G. Encourage cooperative arrangements, networking, and sharing of resources among school systems
H. Encourage the entire school population—students, teachers and staff—to become—during the school day, a model of proper nutrition and physical fitness

GOAL 4: PERFORMANCE OF STUDENTS ON ALL ASSESSMENTS WILL IMPROVE EACH YEAR AND STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT WILL EQUAL OR EXCEED NATIONAL AVERAGES ON NATIONALLY-NORMED ASSESSMENTS

A. Create a state-level School Recognition Program
B. Conduct valid assessments of student progress
C. Ensure appropriate use of assessment data

GOAL 5: ALL HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES WILL BE PREPARED FOR COLLEGE, OTHER POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION, OR GAINFUL EMPLOYMENT

A. Increase academic requirements and standards for the Standard Diploma
B. Require all systems to offer the Advanced Diploma
C. Provide all students with opportunities to become technologically literate through technology education
D. Provide a modified curriculum for Special Education students and at-risk students to include functional activities and community-based instruction
E. Promote the implementation of the Tech Prep. Program
F. Ensure that all students learn critical work place skills
G. Develop meaningful business/industry/education partnerships
H. Develop meaningful parental involvement programs

GOAL 6: THERE WILL BE EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT ADMINISTRATION OF EDUCATION AT ALL LEVELS

A. Improve preparation programs for administrators
B. Increase emphasis on first-year principals
C. There will be effective and efficient administration of education at all levels
D. Improve accountability at all levels
E. Coordinate fiscal and educational operations

GOAL 7: ALL ADULTS IN ALABAMA WILL HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY TO BECOME LITERATE

Increase the emphasis placed on adult education and expand programs available to the state's citizens

Performance-Based Accreditation System (PBAS)

On July 25, 1991, Alabama adopted a new, Performance-Based Accreditation System which will play a prominent role in the state's efforts to achieve enunciated goals for educational improvement. Whereas accreditation had previously been optional for individual schools, under the PBAS the "unit of accreditation is the school system and accreditation is required."

A total of 65 performance-based accreditation standards are now prescribed for Alabama's 130 school systems. Twenty-one are Student Performance Standards which demonstrate student progress resulting from instructional and other educational experiences. The Student Performance Standards are designed to challenge each school system, but not be unattainable. The 21 standards are for specific levels of student achievement on standardized tests (Basic Competency Tests, the Stanford Basic Battery) at various grade levels, and for increases in writing and mathematics performance.

The remaining 44 accreditation standards are System/School Accountability Standards, defined as "indicators of educational conditions or factors that promote student achievement and success." They are divided into five categories:

- Personnel,
- School Environment,
- Opportunities to Learn,
- Student Progress, and
- Leadership and Planning.

There are three levels of accreditation: Accredited-Clear, Accredited-Exemplary, and Accredited-Probation. School systems which do not meet minimum standards will be rated as probationary and required to develop and institute an "Education Improvement Plan" to meet the new standards. School systems on probation will have three years to meet minimum standards. Districts which fail to achieve minimum status within a three-year period may face intervention by the State Superintendent of Education.

Programs will be monitored at the state level, and review teams will conduct approximately 26 on-site reviews each year to monitor progress and compliance. Reviews of schools will be phased in over a five-year period, and reviewers will receive special training on the PBAS. The State Department of Education is responsible for implementation of the program, and will participate in on-site reviews and provide technical assistance as needed.

Effective Schools

The Effective Schools Section within the Department coordinates regional teams of facilitators at nine inservice centers around the state. Using research and practice based on the Effective Schools Movement, these regional teams provide training and resources to school systems and schools that are initiating and implementing improvement efforts.

Needs Assessment

Each of the state's local school boards is required to conduct a comprehensive needs assessment every three years, and assessment teams identify needs and resources within their districts. Team members include local business and industry leaders, state and local government representatives, parents, school administrators and teachers. Teams conduct surveys, on-site visits and interviews with education stakeholders, and report their findings to the public (Alabama SDOE, 1991).

For more information on Alabama school improvement efforts, contact:

Dr. Martha Barton
Assistant State Superintendent
Student Instructional Services
Alabama State Department of Education
50 N. Ripley Street
Montgomery, AL 36130-3901
205-242-8654

FLORIDA

Accountability

During the 1991 Florida Legislative Session, a comprehensive plan for school improvement in Florida's schools was approved. The plan outlines Florida's broad goals for education, and provides a detailed strategy for implementing school improvement and accountability efforts. Referred to as *Blueprint 2000*, the plan is intended to "return the responsibility for education to those closest to the students—the schools, teachers, and parents." The tasks necessary for school improvement are clearly defined, and implementation is now in the initial stages.

The Florida State Education Goals reflect the National Goals articulated by the President and governors, and seven broad areas have been placed into law:

- Readiness to Start School
- Graduation Rate and Readiness for Postsecondary Education and Employment
- Student Performance
- Learning Environment
- School Safety and Environment
- Quality Teachers and Staff
- Adult Literacy (Florida DOE)

Accountability is at the foundation of *Blueprint 2000*. "Florida's education accountability system has grown out of a desire to abandon outmoded structures and systems, build consensus, and devote creative energies to developing effective strategies to address the difficult issues that remain unresolved." The new accountability system intends to improve student performance by clearly defining what students must know and then assessing what they have learned.

Schools will be given far greater latitude by the Department of Education to make decisions and spend state funds in ways which they see fit. At the same time, schools will be held more accountable for reaching standards and achievement levels which are being developed by the new Florida Commission on Education Reform and Accountability (see paragraph following). To help reach the goals that have been agreed upon, and in order to make schools more accountable for their progress at improvement, the following components have been established for *Blueprint 2000*:

A. The establishment of the Florida Commission on Education Reform and Accountability,
B. The development and implementation of Individual School Improvement Plans, and
C. The development of Intervention Strategies and Plans for Evaluation of School Performance.

The Florida Commission on Education Reform and Accountability

A 23-member Commission on Education Reform and Accountability has been formed; it is chaired by the Lieutenant Governor and the Commissioner of Education, and its members include teachers, educational administrators, parents, legislators, and representatives of the business community. The first task of the Commission was to hold ten public hearings before November 1, 1991, and analyze the needs response plans that are being collected around the state. Based on this analysis, the Council will then begin to identify core performance standards to which schools will be held accountable. The Commission will oversee all phases of the school improvement and accountability plan.

Individual School Improvement Plans

All Florida schools will be required to conduct a comprehensive needs assessment to identify areas which need improvement. One component of this task is to develop a school and community profile report which outlines the characteristics, demographics, and services of the school and community.

Data about student performance will also be included. To help schools develop strategies for improvement, district representatives and state employees have been trained to act as facilitators and guides to individual schools. In 1990-91, 53 schools in 19 districts were paired with Department of Education facilitators as a means of developing this new capacity for the Department. During the summer of 1991, teams from each district attended week-long workshops that provided them with guidelines for assisting local efforts at school improvement.

Each school will also need to institute a school advisory council which will be in charge of developing and implementing a school improvement plan. These councils will replace the previously mandated district advisory councils, and will include teachers, administrators, students, parents, and community members. Each school's improvement plan is expected to be submitted to and approved by the district school board by the end of the 1992-93 school year, and implementation of the plan will take place the following year. Improvement strategies must take into consideration the goals, needs, performance standards, and evaluation procedures determined by the state and the school.

Intervention Strategies and Plans for Evaluation

Schools which fail to submit school improvement plans that can be approved by their school board will require direct assistance and may have state funds withheld. Ultimately, schools which do not meet goals for school improvement may face intervention by the School Board. The Florida Department of Education will provide technical assistance and funds for all schools. *Blueprint 2000* allows schools three years to demonstrate progress and positive results of their school improvement initiatives.

One way that results will be presented is through the use of *School Report Profiles* which will be made available to the public beginning in the 1994-95 school year. Also, the Commission plans to produce *Status of Education* reports, as well as to provide guidelines for schools to develop community profiles about the services and support of the community. Successful school improvement programs will be recognized, publicized, and rewarded.

In 2000, *Blueprint 2000* will be reviewed and evaluated. The Commission is expected to recommend that the legislature repeal remaining laws which have been shown to obstruct school improvement efforts (Florida DOE).

For more information on Florida's School improvement efforts, contact:

Robert L. Corley
School Improvement Services
325 West Gaines Street, Suite 401
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0400
School Improvement Hot Line:
904-487-8783

GEORGIA

Georgia is conducting a number of statewide efforts in school improvement and/or restructuring. Several major, current initiatives are derived from the 1986 Georgia Quality Basic Education Law, which contains provisions for innovative programs, waivers, school restructuring, school-based management, accountability, and other reforms.

Schools for the Future Program

This project is designed to encourage schools "to restructure local education to accomplish local, state and national educational goals." Schools apply to the State Board of Education for waivers of state rules, regulations and standards which schools perceive as being in conflict with their goals for improving education. Schools are encouraged to restructure to

- Improve student learning,
- Enhance teaching and curricula,
- Bring about greater equality and opportunity,
- Promote shared decision-making authority, and
- Meet local, state and national goals for education.

To facilitate schools in their attempts to restructure, waivers can be granted in many areas, including:

- Length and structure of the school day and school year
- Curriculum requirements,
- Graduation and promotion requirements,
- Student assessments,
- Certification, assignment, staffing, and formal responsibilities of teachers, administrators and other school personnel,
- Personnel evaluation and staff development, and
- Other state rules, categoricals, and local policies relating to educational practices, (health, safety, or constitutional rights under state or federal law excepted).

Participating schools submit an annual evaluation, attend a yearly meeting and receive on-site visits by SDOE officials. If the school demonstrates educational success over the duration of the plan (measured by improvement in student conduct and standardized test scores, lower dropout rates, increased parental involvement, higher expectations and satisfaction, etc.), an extension of the waivers will be granted.

The Innovation Program

This successful program provides large (up to $75,000), three-year grants to Georgia school systems for "the development, implementation and dissemination" of innovative educational programs. Funding is provided by Federal Chapter 2 funds and state monies, and grants are awarded in three areas:

A. Developmental Projects
B. Validated Projects
C. Adoptions of Validated Projects

A. Developmental Projects address a statewide education priority identified by the Georgia Board of Education. These two- and three-year programs focus on the planning, implementation and evaluation of innovative educational processes.

B. Validated Projects. The Georgia Board of Education has established a Dissemination Center to assist local districts in adopting effective improvements of educational programs or services. The Dissemination Center provides awareness, training and follow-up activities; it maintains a demonstration site where school systems may observe the operation of the program, and provides an evaluation of the effectiveness of the program.

C. Adoption Grants are awarded to local districts requesting to adopt a Validated Project from a state Dissemination Center. Districts receiving adoption grants pay a portion of the costs of the adoption. Each school system is eligible for one adoption grant per fiscal year.

Local Strategic Planning

The purpose of this project, which began in 1987, is to give local systems an opportunity to envision what they want their schools to look like in the future. A Strategic Planning Task Force was formed to encourage local school systems to conduct their own strategic planning. The Task Force, composed of superintendents, local and state board of education personnel, RESAs (Regional Educational Service Agencies), and school-level educators, developed recommendations and oversaw the establishment of a pilot program for local strategic planning in several Georgia school systems.

Beginning in 1989, RESA personnel were trained as external facilitators to assist local school systems in strategic planning. Presently, forty people have been trained as facilitators, and there are approximately thirty local systems currently conducting strategic planning using state-trained facilitators.

For more information about school improvement efforts in Georgia, contact:

Dr. Jim Conkwright
Director, Program Development
Georgia Department of Education
1766 Twin Towers East
Atlanta, GA 30334-5040
404-656-4059

MISSISSIPPI

School improvement in Mississippi has been driven since 1982 by the state's comprehensive education reform act. Accreditation, remediation and state-sponsored technical assistance are the key components of Mississippi's efforts to raise student achievement. An appointed Mississippi Commission on School Accreditation accredits school districts based on student achievement on standardized outcome measures (Basic Skills Assessment Program, Stanford Achievement Test, and the Functional Literacy Examination). Accreditation levels are scaled 1-5, with Level 1 being those schools with the lowest scores.

Districts with **any** schools scoring at the Level 1 rating are placed into probationary status by the State Department of Education, and are required to write a district remediation plan. This plan must be:

Based on the results of analyses of the district's present program and test data,

Approved by the local school board as documented in its minutes, and

Filed with the Commission on School Accreditation within sixty days of notification of status.

The Mississippi State Department of Education (SDOE) identified, selected and trained a cadre of 57 consultants to work with probationary districts in drafting and subsequently implementing remediation plans. The consultants, all of whom are Mississippi educators themselves, are sent in teams to Level 1 districts; team members include expert practitioners in the following areas: curriculum, finance, basic skills, academic reward, college core, at-risk evaluation, instructional and administrative staff evaluation, and school/community relations (consultants often cover more than one area).

The Bureau of School Improvement provides consultants with a publication, A Plan for Technical Assistance, which outlines procedures to be followed by Level 1 districts as they begin the remediation process. Consultants and Level 1 districts can also take advantage of five regional service officers in Mississippi who provide resources and further technical assistance for developing and implementing remediation strategies.

Strategies vary from district to district to meet local needs, and state agencies and foundations collaborate to provide money and technical assistance. Consultants and regional service officers work with districts to develop applications for various funding sources. Once remediation plans are approved, consultants and regional service officers continue to meet with school district personnel to provide assistance and follow-up.

The Mississippi program has shown steady progress, with most of the Level 1 schools demonstrating improvement. Since 1988, the number of schools which have fallen into the Level 1 category has dropped from 17 to 5. High-performing school systems are granted waivers of many regulations, and encouraged to break new ground in their improvement efforts. State officials note that the remediation process is not a quick fix, and that more time will be required to bring students to desired levels of achievement (Mississippi SDOE, 1990).

For more information on Mississippi school improvement efforts, contact:

Dr. Gerald Hasselman
Bureau Director of School Improvement
Mississippi State Department of Education
P.O. Box 771
Jackson, MS 39025-0771
601-359-3768

The Basic Education Program

In 1985, the North Carolina State Legislature passed the Basic Education Program (BEP)—an ambitious, eight-year, $800 million plan to provide frameworks for curriculum and other education reform in North Carolina schools. However, reform efforts have been severely impacted by recession and budget cuts over the past two years. The BEP received less than 17 percent of its scheduled funding this legislative session. Additional cutbacks reduced the BEP even further, and the net result is that the project is presently $300 million behind the original schedule.

Accreditation

State accreditation was revised in 1988-89 and made mandatory for local school systems. It is used to measure the outcomes of the BEP and how well students are performing. Accreditation includes two types of standards: performance and opportunity.

School Improvement and Accountability

Several major initiatives in North Carolina are related to the School Improvement and Accountability Statute (popularly know as Senate Bill 2). Developed as a means of providing local school districts with greater flexibility and accountability, Senate Bill 2 gives local teachers and administrators the authority to make decisions about how to use the resources provided by the state through the BEP and other allotments. Senate Bill 2 is based on the premise that many decisions about the operation of schools are better made at the school level, and provides for a differentiated pay plan, testing improvements and a statewide report card (see below).

As part of the trend toward greater accountability, North Carolina is moving rapidly toward using end-of-grade tests in grades three through eight to replace standardized, criterion-referenced tests. In addition, the General Assembly approved a measure which authorizes the State Board of Education to develop guidelines for intervention at low-performing schools. The measure directs the Board to appoint a caretaker administrator, a caretaker school board or both, no less than two years following January 1, 1994, for school systems with unacceptable performance.

Like the BEP, however, the School Improvement and Accountability Statute has been hit by budget cuts and shifting imperatives. An attempt to amend the measure (Senate Bill 3) was effectively dismantled, and the $29 million which was scheduled to be paid as "merit pay" to the individuals participating in local reforms, was appropriated with the stipulation that school staffs could vote to take the money as an "across-the-board" bonus. Most, if not all, systems voted for the bonus arrangement.

Outcome-Based Education

On a more positive note, the General Assembly approved the Outcome-Based Education Pilot Project that directs the State Board of Education to select four sites to demonstrate this type of reform. The bill provides that the State Board will adopt expectations for student achievement and proficiencies for graduation from high school. Over $3 million will be provided to pilot and subsequently implement the program.

Local School System Report Cards

Annual Report Cards of local school systems are required as part of Senate Bill 2, and the cards contain information related to school system performance as outlined in five sections. The first two sections, School System Characteristics and Community Characteristics, present data summarizing the context in which the system oper-

ates (socioeconomic data, tax base, etc.). Some of these factors are used to calculate an "index of advantagement" that provides each school system with a means for comparing itself with school systems with similar demographic and economic characteristics.

Under the Student Performance section, results are presented for nearly thirty nationally normed and state-specific tests, as well as for other measures, providing a comprehensive summary of school system achievement and allowing for system-to-system comparisons. The fourth section summarizes test scores by subject, taking into account the school system's "advantagement" level. An overall achievement rating is displayed, along with averages for similar school systems and the average for all schools in the state. In the final section, the school system's actual level of performance is presented in relation to a common set of standards established by the State Board of Education for state accreditation purposes.

Other Initiatives

State Superintendent Bob Etheridge has proposed a 20 Point Plan for getting children to school sooner, keeping them in school longer, and requiring them to take more rigorous courses. Many of the Superintendent's points have moved forward despite the recession. Several school systems are experimenting with year-round schools, with some success so far.

For more information on North Carolina school improvement efforts, contact:

Dr. Carolyn Cobb, Director
School Improvement and Development
North Carolina Department of Public Instruction
116 W. Edenton Street
Raleigh, NC 27603-1712
919-733-4591

Educational Improvement Act

South Carolina's comprehensive improvement efforts were triggered in part by the 1983 release of the much-publicized report, *A Nation at Risk*, and by state opinion polls which reflected widespread dissatisfaction and embarrassment regarding the academic performance of students in the state. A coalition of business leaders, legislators and educators collaborated with the governor and state superintendent to draft and pass the landmark Education Improvement Act (EIA) of 1984.

Funded through a one cent addition to the state's sales tax, the EIA provides a comprehensive framework for education reform in South Carolina, to include accountability, assessment, shared decision-making, incentives, increasing teacher salaries, site-based management, school improvement, restructuring, professional development, business partnerships, remedial/compensatory education, attendance and dropout, waivers, accreditation and reporting. Some of the major programs are described below.

Target 2000

In 1989, the General Assembly approved a plan for South Carolina to continue public education reform for the next ten years. The new package, known as Target 2000—School Reform for the Next Decade Act, expanded upon several EIA provisions and added new reform initiatives. Under Target 2000, programs have been implemented or piloted in a number of areas, including:

- Half-day voluntary child development programs for 4-year-olds,
- Parent education programs,
- Dropout prevention and recovery programs,
- Strengthened instruction of problem-solving skills,
- Arts education programs,
- Competitive, school-wide innovation grants program,
- Deregulation provisions to provide waivers of certain state regulations, &
- Expanded training and staff development.

Other provisions of the program are currently being implemented or are under development. The Target 2000 project receives most of its financial support from EIA funds and nonrecurring revenue from the state's General Fund. Like other states in the region, South Carolina is spending a smaller percentage of general fund revenues on education, even though the overall education budget continues to increase.

Curriculum Congress and Curriculum Development Teams

South Carolina has formed a Curriculum Congress to examine present curriculum frameworks and offer recommendations for new and progressive curriculum development. The Curriculum Congress contains representatives from the following areas:

- K-12 Educators,
- Postsecondary Discipline and Education Faculty,
- Subject Matter Projects, Discipline Organizations,
- School Restructuring Organizations,
- Professional Organizations,
- State and Local Education Agency Staff,
- Parents, Business, and Community Resources.

A focal point of the Curriculum Congress is that delegates serve in one of five working areas–curriculum, instruction, assessment, materials, or "the profession" (relating to "the quality and provision of teacher and administrator preparation and professional development programs")—within the subject area of their choice.

Congress delegates will also organize the professional communities they represent to support curricular reform, and stimulate

local curricular innovations that support the types of instructional experiences envisioned by the frameworks.

Curriculum development teams in each subject area will draft curriculum frameworks in visual and performing arts, English/language arts, foreign languages, health/physical education, mathematics, science and history/social studies. The teams will draw from the expertise and reports provided by the Curriculum Congress and existing state and local work in curriculum development.

12-Schools Project

For this new project, groups of teachers in 12 schools will reflect upon, apply and refine new curriculum frameworks developed by State Curriculum Development Teams. The emerging frameworks incorporate the latest research and learning in curriculum development, and ultimately will serve as the basis for instruction and a new student performance assessment system. The teachers will craft instructional units and related performance assessment activities which are tied to the emerging curriculum frameworks in mathematics, science and language arts. Project schools will provide feedback regarding the use and implementation of the curriculum frameworks.

Each project school will use one of the emerging curriculum frameworks developed by the State Curriculum Development Teams as the basis for the design of instructional and assessment activities. Teachers and administrators in the 12 schools will collaboratively determine specific project goals and procedures and then develop their own implementation plans and budgets. The participating schools have been allocated a total of $250,000 by the State Department of Education to implement the project.

School Incentive Reward Program

Approximately one fourth of the schools in the state each year receive incentive awards to be used for instructional programs. The program is competitive, and schools utilize funds to purchase computers, supplies, and fund additional personnel to improve basic and higher level skills in English, language arts and other areas. The incentive program rewards and recognizes schools and districts for exceptional or improved performance.

Effective Schools Training

The purpose of South Carolina's Effective Schools Training program is to translate research on effective schools into practice. Based on the work of Dr. Ronald Edmonds, the program utilizes Edmonds' six correlates of effective schools as a framework for improvement efforts. The training includes information and practice on how to conduct assessment surveys, establish and operate School Improvement Councils, and how to initiate and implement improvement plans. The program also presents seminars with national school improvement experts for administrators and involves teachers in curriculum development, instructional management and peer coaching.

Business and Industry Liaison Program

An innovative approach to professional development, the Business and Industry Liaison Program enables school and district administrators to enhance their leadership and managerial skills by participating in corporate training programs. Initiated by the Administrators' Leadership Academy, this program is a collaborative effort between the SDOE and businesses and industries such as IBM, the South Carolina Electric and Gas Company, Millikin, Carolina Power and Light and the Duke Power Company.

Over 300 administrators have participated in the program, which offers training in areas such as leadership, public speaking, stress management, interpersonal relations, time management, strategic planning and decision making. To supplement the corporate training, several Leadership Academy staff have been certified as trainers in

the IBM and Carolina Power and Light training models and provide training in these programs throughout the state.

Center for the Advancement of Teaching

Established in 1990 as part of the Target 2000 legislation, the Center for the Advancement of Teaching and School Leadership is the first state-supported center of its kind in the nation.

A collaborative effort among higher education, public schools and businesses, the Center also works closely with national and regional organizations involved in school change. A Business/Education Advisory Council identifies successful management practices, and the Technology Council keeps the Center abreast of the latest developments in computers, telecommunications and other technology.

In addition, nationally recognized scholars and practitioners provide "cutting-edge" training to public school teams and college faculty who, in turn, serve as advisors, facilitators and resource brokers to other schools. To support Associate Schools, which are selected from schools submitting proposals for innovative change and restructuring initiatives, the Center provides conferences, workshops, hot lines, and a telecommunications network. The Center also arranges for on-site visits by Associate School teams to restructured schools across the nation.

The Center publishes Innovation, a quarterly newsletter featuring information on the Center's Activities, upcoming conferences and workshops, recommended resources for restructuring schools, and restructuring projects undertaken by individual schools.

For Additional information contact:

Dr. Barbara L. Gottesman, Director
Center for the Advancement of
Teaching and School Leadership,
311 Breazeale, Winthrop College,
Rock Hill, SC 29733,
803-323-4772
South Carolina Toll Free: 800-768-2875.

The School Council Assistance Project

The School Council Assistance Project was created in 1978 to provide support to school improvement councils. Located in the University of South Carolina College of Education, the Project provides a wide range of workshops and training programs, video and print resources, and technical assistance including computer analyses of student achievement data and needs assessments. The project also conducts research on school improvement council issues. See *Dynamite Idea* on pages 15-16 for a more complete description.

Efforts in South Carolina have become a model for school improvement and systemic reform. Test scores, student achievement levels and public opinion ratings have shown significant, even nation-leading, improvement in many areas since the adoption of the EIA. Scores have recently leveled off or shown slight declines, however, and state officials are trying to determine how best to redirect and re-commit their efforts to ensure that improvements will be lasting and viable.

For more information about South Carolina school improvement and reform efforts, contact:

David Potter
Office of Policy Research
South Carolina State Department
of Education
Rutledge Building, Room 607
1429 Senate Street
Columbia, SC 29201
803-734-8266

Section IV

RESOURCES - Where To Go For Help

Organization: **National Committee for Citizens in Education (NCCE)**

Description and Purpose: Based in Washington, D.C., NCCE provides information, resources and technical assistance to parents, educators and other citizens who are interested in parent involvement and other issues in education. The organization has an extensive database of information on education law, research and policy, and parents and others may call NCCE's toll free hot line for free information. Other areas of focus for the organization include school improvement, school choice, bilingual education, school-based management and decision making, and dropout prevention.

In addition to its toll free number, NCCE offers a catalog which lists and describes its numerous publications, and a newsletter, *Network for Public Schools*, highlighting important issues in education.

Contact Information:

National Committee for Citizens in Education
900 2nd Street, N.E., Suite 8
Washington, D.C. 20002
Toll Free 1-800-NETWORK (1-800-638-9675)
FAX 202-544-9473

Organization: **Center for Research on Effective Schooling for Disadvantaged Students**

Description and Purpose: The Center's mission is to improve the education of disadvantaged students at each level of schooling through new knowledge and practices produced by scientific study and evaluation. Strategies include: to focus on the school as the major source of improvement in the education of the disadvantaged; to address the needs and interests of the educationally disadvantaged at all levels of development; to address the unique needs of language minority students; and to incorporate the family and community into the school improvement effort. The Center has coordinated long-range research on cooperative learning, and offers technical assistance to school systems which are interested in this efective learning strategy.

Contact Information:

Center for Research on Effective Schooling for Disadvantaged Students
School of Arts and Sciences
The Johns Hopkins University
3505 N. Charles Street
Baltimore, MD 21218
301-338-7570

Organization: **National Center on Effective Secondary Schools**

Description and Purpose: The Center seeks to learn how to improve student achievement in secondary schools. Special attention is directed to the needs of disadvantaged and less successful students. Goals of the Center include improving student engagement and academic achievement, through the dissemination of proven methods and the development of new strategies for teachers and administrators. The Center has a Clearinghouse on Academic Achievement for interested educators.

Contact Information:

National Center on Effective Secondary Schools
University of Wisconsin-Madison
1025 West Johnson Street
Madison, WS 53706
608-263-7575

Organization: **South Carolina Educational Policy Center, and the SouthEastern Regional Vision for Education (SERVE)**

Description and Purpose: One of several SERVE-sponsored Research and Development (R&D) projects, the purpose of the USC SERVE Project is to create a collaborative effort in rural South Carolina school districts among teachers, administrators and university professors which will explore and develop improved educational programs for economically disadvantaged, low-achieving students who are enrolled in federally-funded Chapter I programs, state-funded EIA compensatory and remedial programs, or both. As many as eight districts will participate in the project, which will run through 1995. Staff from the districts will collaboratively explore with university professors an empirically-derived model which has resulted from previous studies conducted at the University of South Carolina's Educational Policy Center.

Contact Information:

Melba Riddle, Project Director
Educational Policy Center
University of South Carolina
Columbia, SC 29208
803-777-7715

Title: **Florida's *Blueprint for Career Preparation***

Author(s): Florida Department of Education

Description and Purpose: This is a School Improvement Program now being implemented in 39 of Florida's 67 school districts. It is designed to prepare students graduating from Florida's public schools to begin a career and continue their education at a postsecondary technical school, community college or university. School and community leaders contribute their time and expertise to develop instructional, guidance and articulation strategies that will improve academic and vocational education for all students (grades K-university).

The *Blueprint* unifies concepts of technology, math and science in grades K-8 and integrates academic and vocational instruction grades 8-postsecondary. Applied coursework in mathematics, science and communication for secondary students combines rigorous academic coursework and "real-world" relevance. Guidance programs support students by defining quality career and educational plans for high school and beyond. Tech-prep and similar articulation arrangements are supported by the feeder pattern organization of each *Blueprint* Pilot District (grades K-adult). Initial results indicate higher academic achievement, increased promotion rates, decreased general course offerings and increased enrollment in higher order math, science and communication.

Contact Information: Bureau of Career Development and Educational Improvement
Florida Department of Education
325 West Gaines Street
Tallahassee, FL 33299-0400
904-488-0400, SunCom 278-0400 (Florida Only)
Hotline 800-342-927

Title:	**How Can Student Achievement Be Improved? Mississippi's Response**
Author:	Mississippi State Department of Education
	Description and Purpose: Publication describes Mississippi's accreditation and remediation systems, and specifically relates the steps taken by the State Department of Education in 1988 to raise the achievement of 17 school districts which had unacceptable levels of academic performance.
Cost:	Free
Contact Information:	Mississippi Department of Education Bureau of School Improvement P.O. Box 771 Jackson, MS 39205-0771
Title:	**School Improvement Councils: A Guide to Effectiveness,** and **Focus on School Improvement: School Improvement Councils Working for Effective Schools**
Author:	School Council Assistance Project
Description and purpose:	Both publications provide useful information an the role that school improvement councils can play in school improvement efforts.
Cost:	There is a fee to cover printing, postage and handling
Contact information:	School Council Assistance Project College of Education University of South Carolina Columbia, SC 29208 Telephone 803-777-7658
Title:	**What is the Penny Buying for South Carolina?**
Author:	South Carolina State Department of Education
Description and purpose:	Publication describes South Carolina's school reform efforts based on the Educational Improvement Act and the subsequent Target 2000 legislation, noting areas of improvement and future directions for reform efforts.
Cost:	Copies of this document are available on a limited basis
Contact Information:	South Carolina Department of Education 1429 Senate Street Columbia, SC 29201

Title:	**Principals' Yellow Pages**
Author(s):	Carlos "Skip" Sasse; Nancy Livesay; Charlene Houghton
Description and Purpose:	To be used by elementary and secondary school principals as a resource for ideas and solutions to school problems they face; ideas and initiatives are shared by current principals with other principals. Format provides access to information selectively and quickly. Directory covers such topics as selecting and training of staff; improving and maintaining student attitude; discipline, academic performance; curriculum planning; using computers; teaching special needs students and obtaining community support. **The Directory is currently being revised.**
Materials:	Includes: participant index list with addresses and telephone numbers of the principals in the catalog; subject index; and advantages and disavantages section following each major topic.
Cost:	Free
Contact Information:	Resident Principal Florida Department of Education Office of Policy Research and Accountability 325 West Gaines Street Tallahassee, FL 32399-0400 (904) 488-1611 or Florida SunCom 278-1611
Title:	**Design for Effective Schools in Lee County**
Author(s):	District personnel and consultants
Description and Purpose:	This handbook is to be used by school staff to guide individual school improvement efforts. Each school is to develop a Comprehensive Educational Growth Plan which uses eight characteristics of effective schools as categories to describe the important conditions to be developed and nurtured in each school. The handbook provides a common body of information to be used as the primary source to guide the school's improvement initiatives. Each of the eight characteristics is described and a set of indicators is included to help develop a plan of action and evaluation strategies.
Materials:	A 46-page handbook with the eight effective schools characteristics: 1) Clear and Focused School Mission; 2) Safety and Orderly Environment; 3) Instructional Leadership; 4) High Expectations; 5) Opportunity to Learn; 6) Frequent Monitoring of School Progress; 7) Home/School Partnership; 8) Effective Teaching.
Cost:	Free

Contact Information: Dr. Charles W. Godwin, Assistant Superintendent
Lee County Public Schools
2055 Central Avenue
Ft. Myers, FL 33901
(813) 334-1102 or Suncom 759-5000

Title: **An Action Guide to School Improvement**

Author(s): Susan Loucks-Horsley and Leslie F. Hergert

Description and Purpose: The publication is intended primarily for educators responsible for local school improvement (principals, coordinators, teachers, department heads, administrators); also intended for trainers, outside support (i.e., consultants and agencies), and decision makers (e.g., local school boards, education agencies, and legislators).

Describes a practical and research-based conceptual framework for implementing change to bring about school improvement, and is divided into seven linear steps:

1) Establishing the School Improvement Project; 2) Assessment and Goal Setting; 3) Identifying an Ideal Solution; 4) Preparing for Implementation; 5) Implementing; 6) Review; and 7) Maintenance and Institutionalization.

An appendix is provided with sources of school improvement resources that are available to schools.

Cost: $5.00

Contact Information: Cynthia Connolly, The NETWORK, Inc.
290 South Main Street
Andover, MA 01810
(617) 470-1080

Title: **A Process Guide for School Improvement**

Author(s): Herbert J. Klausmeier

Description and Purpose: Guide is for use in locally-conducted inservice programs and university courses and programs. It is designed to aid individual schools as well as district offices in starting and maintaining a self-improvement capability characterized by 1) maintaining satisfactory student outcomes and improving unsatisfactory ones; 2) maintaining or improving effective instructional practices; 3) maintaining or improving job satisfaction and morale; and 4) increasing competency and professional development of staff.

Chapter 1 is for all levels of schooling, Chapters 2 - 11 are more for the middle school and high school, and Chapter 12 is more for the elementary school. Chapters 2 - 11 give improvement suggestions and illustrative exemplary practices of both middle and high schools. Chapter 12 does the same for elementary schools. Most information regarding middle or elementary schools is relevant to both.

Each chapter includes an improvement plan, covering such areas as: administration/structural organization; program planning; curriculum planning; school climate; testing/data gathering/evaluation; teacher-advisor program planning; home/school/community relations; and components contributing to effectiveness and activity planning to increase effectiveness.

In addition, the Appendix offers suggestions for using the guide in locally conducted inservice/staff development programs, and supplies supplementary materials for secondary and elementary schooling. Simulations are also available from the Wisconsin Center for Education Research (one each – elementary, middle, and high school).

Cost: $12.75 paperback, $28.00 hardcover

Contact Information:

University Press of America
4720 Boston Way
Lanham, MD 20706
(301) 459-3366

Title: **An Implementation Guide for the Legislative Mandated South Carolina School Improvement Process**

Author(s): Gerald K. Corley; Jim Ray; Sidney B. Cooper; and Charlie Williams

Description and Purpose: South Carolina's research-based school improvement process provides a guide for principals, district administrators, and other change agents to effect positive change in the schools.

Consists of six chapters that discuss the following: establishing a school improvement council, conducting needs assessment, and developing and implementing the school improvement plan, as well as presenting the research and legislative base for the process.

Appendices include instructions for the preparation of an annual school improvement report, school summary report, and annual district staff development report.

Central to the process is the establishment of a school improvement council at each school. The principal and school board are primary determiners of the council's role and responsibilities, with a goal of developing a cadre of school level agents for positive change.

Cost: Free

Contact Information: Raymond L. Morton, Director
Office of Public Information
South Carolina Department of Education
1429 Senate Street
Columbia, SC 29201
(803) 734-8500

Title: **Creating Effective Schools**

Author(s): Wilbur B. Brookover, Laurence Beamer, Helen Efthim, Douglas Hathaway, Lawrence Lezotte, Stephen Miller, Joseph Passalacqua, Louis Tomatzky

Description and Purpose: Designed to be used by inservice staff in schools with the goal of improving student achievement through modifications in the school learning environment, particularly in improving achievement in low socioeconomic status schools.

The document provides important principles necessary for improving school environment and student achievement; 11 modules designed to assist with inservice training; and a reference section. Modules are to be used as a functional whole rather than using particular modules for particular needs.

The four areas necessary for improving school environment/student achievement include, School Learning Climate; The Goal of School Learning Climate Improvement; Using the School Learning Climate Modules; and Additional Resources.

Title: **Building Effective Schools: Assessing, Planning, Implementing**

Author(s): Janet Chrispeels and David Meaney, Ed.D.

Description and Purpose: Manual is designed to assist school administrators, principals, and other educational leaders who wish to implement a school improvement program based on the effective schools research.

Defines the term "effective school," describes characteristics associated with effective schools, and outlines the process being used by the San Diego County Office of Education to assist schools in becoming effective. The process is based on research on effective schools, effective classroom teaching, organizational development, and educational change.

Goal of the program is to increase the overall level of student achievement for all students through a process of assessment and planning, and the implementation of a site-generated school effectiveness plan. Purposes are: 1) to determine the existence of specified elements needed to achieve school effectiveness; 2) to assess the school's academic effectiveness; 3) to determine the school's climate; 4) to establish a school action plan for improvement; and 5) to implement a plan for improvement.

Consists of four chapters, plus tables, charts, and appendices that include the following materials that could be useful staff development handouts: teacher/staff questionnaires, parent/student surveys, assessment instruments, sample interview questions, evaluation forms, numerous test results, data collection forms, observation forms, work sheets, and techniques.

Cost: $20.00

Contact Information: San Diego County Office of Education
Room 212
6401 Linda Vista Road
San Diego, CA 19211-7399
(619) 292-3500

Title: **Connecticut Perspectives on Instructionally Effective Schools: A Model and a Process**

Author(s): William J. Gauthier, Jr.

Description and Purpose: Helps principals and faculty examine certain characteristics coincident with student learning, develop an action plan, and initiate long-term change in a school-based setting.

Describes the model and process being used by the Connecticut State Department of Education to assist schools in improving their effectiveness. Provides an operational definition of the term "effectiveness" and summarizes the research that provides the conceptual base for the model.

Connecticut's efforts rest upon research on teacher effectiveness and classroom instruction as well as on research that examines school effects; the process for implementing the research findings advocates a systems approach to school improvement and is firmly grounded in change theory. Focus is on the school as a complex social system with many interacting components that operate together to influence student achievements; a planned, ongoing and systematic curriculum; and community involvement in determining goals and supporting school effectiveness efforts.

The process advocates a voluntary, school-based approach that helps the school examine itself in relation to school effectiveness characteristics, and develop and implement an action plan that is meaningful to the faculty and principal of the school. The steps are initial contact; dialogue and commitment; assessment; developing the action plan; and implementation.

Cost: Free

Contact Information: William J. Gauthier, Jr. Chief
Bureau of School and Program Development
Division of Elementary and Secondary Education
Connecticut State Department of Education
Post Office Box 2219
Hartford, CT 06145
(203) 566-5497

Title: **Achieving School Effectiveness: Process Steps and Variables**

Rhode Island Educational Leadership Academy

Description and Purpose: Reference guide is designed to help Rhode Island principals develop planning skills, refine understanding of issues related to school effectiveness, and implement programs that lead to increased teacher and student performance. Can be a useful resource to teachers and other school administrators as well.

Guide consists of two sections -- Process Steps and School Effectiveness Variables. Each process step provides practical advice, concrete examples, and a list of further references for school improvement leaders. Each school effectiveness variable presents highlights from the research, special considerations for the principal, and sources for more detailed analysis. Summaries focus on core elements of each process step or effectiveness variable and provide direction for further study and implementation. Includes checklists, action plans, effectiveness strategies, and suggested policies.

Highlights research findings and suggests practical action steps for school improvement leadership. Process steps include: Form Teams, Assess Needs, Establish Priorities, Develop Action Plans, Implement Plans, Monitor Progress, Evaluate Impact. School Effectiveness Variables include: Clear and Focused School Goals, Instructional Leadership, High Expectations, Time on Task, Monitoring Student Performance, Safe and Orderly Environment and Home-School Relations.

Cost: $5.00

Contact Information: Charles Mojkowski, Executive Director
Rhode Island Educational Leadership Academy
78 Foxglove Drive
Cranston, RI 02920
(401) 943-6668

Title: **How to Design a Program Evaluation**
How to Measure Achievement
How to Measure Program Implementation
How to Present an Evaluation Report

Author(s): Lynn Lyons Morris and Carol Taylor Fitz-Gibbon

Description and Purpose: Guides and assists practitioners' at all levels in planning and managing of evaluations.

Consists of four selections from the Program Evaluation Kit (SAGE Publications, Beverly Hills). The complete Program Evaluation Kit contains eight books that answer questions a practicing evaluator might ask.

Title: **What's A Plan Without a Process? A Training Handbook for Staff Work Groups**

Author(s): Rima Miller

Description and Purpose: School improvement team members need to be problem solvers, idea generators, schedulers, motivators, and program developers. They must be able to work cooperatively and effectively in a variety of group settings. The handbook was developed in an effort to identify selected skills to strengthen the team approach to school improvement planning. While the handbook was designed for use by the School Effectiveness Training Program (SET) and the Secondary School Development Program (SSDP), the activities can be applied successfully by any group.

Materials include principles for teamwork, team member roles, using consensus, prioritizing problem-solving strategies, planning considerations, and implementation analysis.

Cost: $35.00

Contact Information: Rima Miller
Research for Better Schools, Inc.
444 North Third Street
Philadelphia, PA 19123
(215) 574-9300

Title: **Achieving Excellence (A+)**

Author(s): Mid-Continent Regional Educational Laboratory

Description and Purpose: The *Achieving Excellence (A+) Program* provides a management tool that helps educators take stock of their current practices in light of current research. A+ suggests performance indicators that local personnel use to gather baseline data. These indicators are then used to monitor the impact of improvement strategies.

Materials: Three ring binder *Achieving Excellence*, divided into three main sections:
Academic Efficiency, Student Success, Improvement Management.

Cost: Dependent upon number of participants and design of program, on a district-by-district basis; binder can be purchased separately.

Section V

APPENDIX

A. Quick Perception Quiz and Results Graph

B. School Improvement Needs Assessment Survey

C. Sample Problem Statement

D. Characteristics of Effective School Councils

E. The Role of the Principal Vis-a-Vis School Improvement Councils

F. The Role of the School District Vis-a-Vis School Improvement Councils

APPENDIX A--QUICK PERCEPTION QUIZ

The first step toward comprehensive school improvement is deciding that it is necessary and that you would like to be involved in a plan for improvement. What needs to be improved? Do you already have an effective improvement plan? To answer these questions, take the quick quiz below. It would be interesting to have principals, teachers, parents and students try it as well—perhaps at a PTA or advisory committee meeting—and to compare the results using the graph provided on the following page. This quiz is based on research which defines effective schools.

The rating scale is as follows: **5**—agree strongly; **4**—agree; **3**—undecided; **2**—disagree; **1**—disagree strongly; **0**—not applicable. Circle the appropriate number.

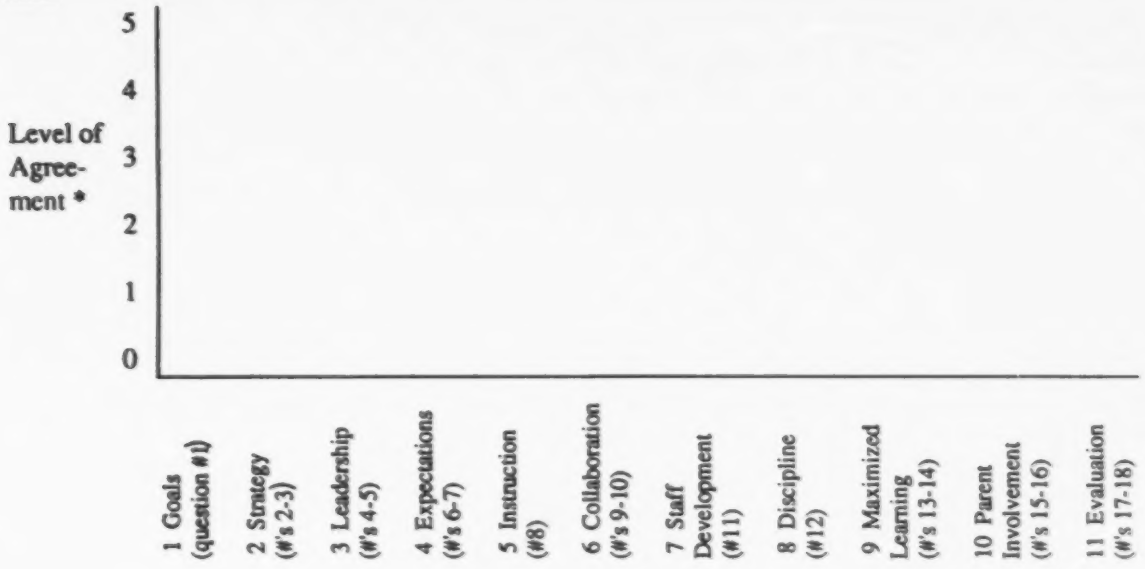
	5	4	3	2	1	0
1. There is a collaboratively-written statement of goals, and a vision for the school which is shared by administrators, teachers, students and parents.	5	4	3	2	1	0
2. The school has conducted an assessment to determine needs and strengths.	5	4	3	2	1	0
3. A detailed improvement plan has been developed based on assessed needs.	5	4	3	2	1	0
4. The principal is highly visible around the school.	5	4	3	2	1	0
5. There is clear and effective instructional leadership from the principal.	5	4	3	2	1	0
6. Teachers believe students can master basic skills at each grade level.	5	4	3	2	1	0
7. Low-achieving students are called upon as often as other students in the classroom.	5	4	3	2	1	0
8. Subject objectives are coordinated and monitored through all grades.	5	4	3	2	1	0
9. Administrators, teachers and parents participate in school planning and decision-making processes.	5	4	3	2	1	0
10. School coordination is not characterized by rigid control from the top down.	5	4	3	2	1	0
11. Staff development plans serve school-wide needs, and are related directly to the school improvement plan.	5	4	3	2	1	0
12. Generally, student discipline is not an issue at the school.	5	4	3	2	1	0
13. Outside interruptions rarely interfere with instructional time.	5	4	3	2	1	0
14. Classroom time is focused on content and students are involved in active learning.	5	4	3	2	1	0
15. There is an active parent group in the school involving a majority of parents.	5	4	3	2	1	0
16. Ninety to 100 percent of parents attend scheduled parent-teacher conferences.	5	4	3	2	1	0
17. Assessments measure what students are expected to learn.	5	4	3	2	1	0
18. Assessment information is used regularly to improve curriculum and instruction.	5	4	3	2	1	0

Please mark the appropriate category: Administrator _____ Parent/Community _____

Teacher _____ Student _____ Advisory Committee Member _____

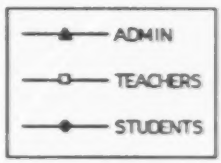
APPENDIX A: Quick Quiz Results Graph

After each group has completed the quiz, average the scores for each group by answer. Plot the average scores by group on the graph below. The questions have been divided into eleven catagories.

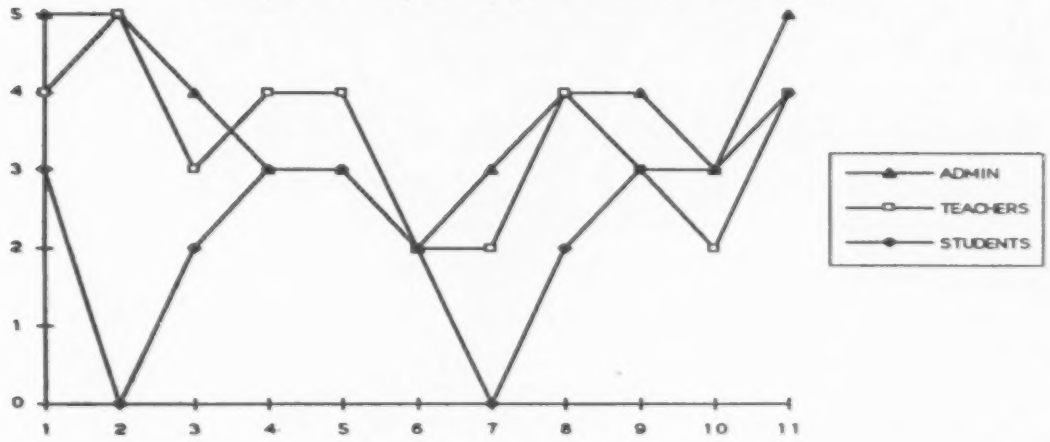


*5 Agree Strongly
4 Agree
3 Undecided
2 Disagree
1 Disagree Strongly
0 Not Applicable

SYMBOLS



Example of a completed graph for fictitious Florida School:



School Improvement Needs-Assessment Survey

I. Clear School Mission	Low 1	2	3	4	High 5
A. School/districtwide* unity exists toward the mission of the school/district.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
B. Goals relating to the mission are clearly stated in writing and were developed from broad participatory involvement.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
C. Goals relating to the mission are regularly monitored, evaluated, and updated to maintain current relevance.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
D. The school/district goals are reviewed annually with new school board and staff members to maintain current relevance.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
E. Teachers, students, and administrators are provided with the necessary human and physical resources to carry out their mission responsibilities.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
F. Written sequential objectives have been developed in all content areas.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
G. Students spend five hours per week on homework assignments.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
II. Strong Instructional Leadership					
A. There is clear, strong instructional leadership from the principal/central office in this district/school; staff members know what is expected, where they're going, and how to get there.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
B. The principal/central office regularly involves the staff regarding instructional issues, programs, and new developments.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
C. The principal/central office has established a clear, fair, and consistent policy regarding all facets of the instructional program and personnel functions aimed at development and resolution.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
D. The principal/central office uses test results to recommend change and modification to the instructional program.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
E. The principal/central office is sensitive to and supportive of staff needs.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

** Where the term school/district is used, cross out the part that does not apply (i.e., if the survey is for a school, cross out district and vice versa). Do the same for principal/central office.*

Source: *School Improvement: A Resource and Planning Guide*. Wisconsin Department of Education, 1988

	Low				High
	1	2	3	4	5
F. The principal/central office has formal observation, evaluation, and follow-up procedures for rating and improving teacher performance.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
G. The principal/central office requires and regularly reviews lesson plans to evaluate their quality and relevance to the district goals, mission, and curriculum.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
H. The principal/central office encourages and provides the opportunity for staff development (workshops, conferences, release time).	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I. The principal/central office exhibits and encourages leadership that is in tune with current thinking and fosters creative involvement in the instructional programs.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
J. The principal/central office encourages collaborative rather than directed leadership and involvement .	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
III. School Learning Climate					
A. School administrators and staff work together in the decision-making process.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
B. School administrators and staff hold high expectations for student behavior; students are aware of these standards and know they will be held accountable.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
C. School administrators and staff hold high expectations for student achievement; students are aware of and understand these expectations.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
D. Emphasis is placed on student time on task. Classroom interruptions are held to an absolute minimum.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
E. School personnel, students, and community members take pride in their school and its appearance.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
F. Teachers and students show respect for each other and enthusiasm for learning.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
G. Students are expected to master their subject matter.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
IV. Opportunity to Learn and Academic Engaged Time					
A. The school/district has a written policy and procedure relating to pupil attendance, truancy, and tardiness that is uniformly administered.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
B. Efforts are always sought to increase available time for instruction through more efficient time scheduling.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

	Low				High
	1	2	3	4	5
C. Classroom interruptions are discouraged and kept to an absolute minimum for management procedures such as intercom messages, unnecessary moving about, and tardinesses.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
D. Planned use of instructional aides, volunteers, and tutors is designed to increase instructional time on task.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
E. There has been a fairly recent attempt to assess how time is wasted and how engaged time can be effectively increased.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
V. High Pupil Expectations					
A. Teachers and administrators believe that all students—regardless of their social and economic background—can master subject matters at the competency levels established as the district standard.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
B. Teachers in the school/district hold consistently high expectations for all students.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
C. Ninety-five percent or more of the students in this school/district can be expected to complete high school.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
D. Students understand the high achievement expectations and react positively to that circumstance.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
E. This school/district encourages heterogeneous grouping and seldom separates students on the basis of ability or handicapping condition.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
F. The number of students from low-income families retained in a grade is proportionately the same as that of students from other income categories.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
G. There is a consistent pattern in this school/district that is evident from teacher to teacher as it relates to goals, mission, and high achievement expectations.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
H. Teacher lessons and classroom presentations are varied and take into consideration the individual differences of students.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I. Student achievement is monitored regularly through appropriate test and measurement techniques.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
J. Parents are informed of and involved in the high achievement standards of the school/district.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

	Low				High
	1	2	3	4	5
VI. Monitoring of Pupil Progress					
A. In addition to report cards, the school/district has established regular procedures for notifying parents and students of student progress.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
B. The school/district uses a standardized testing program to measure school/district progress.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
C. The standardized tests match the curriculum of the school/district.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
D. The school/district uses the standardized test results to publicize and improve programs and performance.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
E. All staff members are provided test results and an appropriate interpretation of their meaning.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
F. The principal, staff, and central office personnel use tests and other assessment techniques as the basis for instituting change in curriculum and program thrust.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
VII. Parent and Community Involvement					
A. The school/district encourages parent/community involvement through active committee assignments in broad areas of program/policy activities.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
B. The school/district has a wide range of activities available for parents to participate in.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
C. The school/district has a systematic procedure established to ensure that the affairs of the school/district are properly communicated to the parents and community.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
D. Parents and members of the community are used as volunteer aids and tutors.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
E. The community is considered and used as an educational resource in school/district programs.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
F. Parents and community members are proud of their schools and support them at an appropriate level.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

APPENDIX C: SAMPLE PROBLEM STATEMENT

Kind of Problem
- Curricular
- More specifically. Language Arts
- More specifically, lack of continuity in Language Arts

Who is Affected?
- All students
- More specifically, Grades 1-6 (with coordination with Kindergarten)

How they are Affected
- Students
  - Repeating skills they have already learned (poor use of time)
  - Tuning out
  - Punctuation is poor (CAT scores)
  - Not using skills they have "mastered;" transfer is poor (spelling, commas correct on testbut later used incorrectly in sentences)

- **Teachers**
  - Frustrated by frequent changes
  - Having difficulty integrating individua skills into a meaningful whole
  - Do not know what materials and skills students have had, and will have
  - Assessment device requires a month to process; teachers do not know what specific skills to test the first month

Evidence
- Teacher observation
- School scores (CAT) are lower than other schools in the system in reading and language

Causes
- Wide variety of programs being used without any link
- Lack of teacher training in use of programs
- Communication between teachers is difficult

Goals for Improvement
- Sequential language arts program (integrating reading, spelling, listening, writing, speaking, handwriting, grammar)
- Record keeping system that can track student progress from year to year and within a year
- Improved use of language arts skills in other content areas (skill transfer)
- Teachers know where to place students on the first day of school
- Provide enrichment activities for above-average students
- Improve teacher training to ensure best use of programs
- Prepare teachers to better handle individual needs

Adapted from: Loucks-Horsley & Hergert, An Action Guide to School Improvement, 1985.
arts skills in other content areas (skill transfer)

APPENDIX D

CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVE SCHOOL COUNCILS

(Note: The text following is reprinted with permission from School Improvement Councils: A Guide to Effectiveness. School Council Assistance Project, College of Education, University of South Carolina, 1989. Schools in South Carolina are required to have school improvement councils, and the School Council Assistance Project provides information, workshops, and technical assistance in support of these councils. See page 16 for address.)

Councils that work well share a common set of characteristics:

Representativeness:

Since two-thirds of the council must be elected, the selection process should guarantee that council membership is truly representative. However, it may be necessary to recruit potential candidates from different segments of the community and propose them for election. Appointments by the principal should be made to balance the group in terms of race, sex, geography and other variables, so that the SIC membership reflects the school and the community as a whole.

Creating task forces or ad hoc committees as part of the council structure is one way to involve more people in the work of the council and to ensure greater representation. Often people are willing to volunteer their time to work on a specific issue if there is a definite timetable that includes a target date for concluding the committee's business.

Clear Sense of Purpose:

Effective councils set yearly goals and objectives through the needs assessment process. Clearly stated objectives and task-oriented strategies give the council a sense of purpose and direction, which guarantees a sense of fulfillment at the end of the school year.

Each council member must be aware of his or her responsibilities. Orientation of new members is vital. So also is training in effective schools research, which is used to develop the annual report.

Action-Oriented Meetings:

Council meetings need to be guided by well-conceived agendas. Decisions must be made and plans of action developed and implemented. These actions will provide evidence to members and constituents that council meetings are worth their personal time and effort.

Ideally, a council will have nine to 15 members. Research has found that this size group provides enough people to perform the SIC's required duties and functions without causing collaborative decision making to become unwieldy.

Research has also shown that effective councils tend to have chair-persons elected by council

members rather than appointed by principals. These councils also meet regularly (a minimum of 9-12 times a year), since the complex process of assessing, planning, and monitoring cannot be accomplished without sufficient time devoted to it.

Recognition of Council Members:

Each council member should receive a personal sense of accomplishment and public recognition for his or her services. People need to know they are appreciated and, by being appreciated are more willing to give of their time.

Evaluation:

In addition to evaluating its effectiveness in accomplishing the objectives and strategies contained in the School Improvement Plan, an effective council continually evaluates its own processes and procedures. Councils will continue to have action-oriented meetings when they take the time to periodically evaluate them.

APPENDIX E

THE ROLE OF THE PRINCIPAL VIS-A-VIS SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT COUNCILS

(Note: The text following is reprinted with permission from School Improvement Councils: A Guide to Effectiveness. School Council Assistance Project, College of Education, University of South Carolina, 1989. Schools in South Carolina are required to have school improvement councils, and the School Council Assistance Project provides information, workshops, and technical assistance in support of these councils. See page 16 for address.)

The (1984 South Carolina Education Improvement Act) does not speak directly to the role of the principal vis-a-vis the School Improvement Council except to say that the council is to assist the principal. Self-confident and wise principals use their councils in as many ways as possible to help them improve student achievement in their schools. These principals use their appointment powers to select knowledgeable and talented people to serve on their councils. Individuals selected are sometimes critics of the school and its programs, but the principals know that often the best way to turn critics into supporters is to involve them in decisions about the school.

Principals can help their councils be more effective by:

- Providing them will full information about the school;
- Securing them support services, such as secretarial assistance;
- Acknowledging their importance by publicizing election winners and new appointees;
- Being aware that teachers, students and parents may be uncomfortable in disagreeing with him or her in council meetings and helping to establish a group norm that disagreements are expected and even encouraged; and
- Being careful in exercising the position power that being principal confers on him or her so the group does not lose the independence it needs to come up with creative solutions to problems.

APPENDIX F

THE ROLE OF THE DISTRICT VIS-A-VIS SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT COUNCILS

(Note: The text following is reprinted with permission from School Improvement Councils: A Guide to Effectiveness. School Council Assistance Project, College of Education, University of South Carolina, 1989. Schools in South Carolina are required to have school improvement councils, and the School Council Assistance Project provides information, workshops, and technical assistance in support of these councils. See page 16 for address.)

The district's superintendent and board of education play a key role in determining the effectiveness of their school improvement councils (SICs). For SICs to be effective, district staff and board members must:

- Clearly define the role and purpose of the councils. This can be accomplished by creating district guidelines for SIC bylaws, by specifying the activities of councils and by drawing up timelines within which those activities must be accomplished.

- Demonstrate that they believe SICs are a valuable part of the operation of their schools. They can do this by having key administrators attend council meetings and by providing space, typing, copying and related support for council activities.

- Acknowledge the effort council members put into their work. They can recognize council members through certificates of appreciation, by hosting luncheons or dinners for them, by publicizing their efforts and achievements in district newsletters and/or writing news releases about them for local newspapers.

- Review the work of the SICs. Boards are required by law (in South Carolina) to review the annual School Improvement Reports prepared by their district councils, and provide written appraisals to the councils. The district should follow up on all items that it can address and, whenever possible, implement recommendations of the councils. When implementation is not possible, the council should be informed, in writing, why the district is unwilling or unable to take action.

- Provide councils with training and technical assistance. This may be done through district staff, by funding council members to attend conferences and workshops (travel expenses, registration fees, provision of a district van or car, etc.) and/or by drawing on the resources of the School Council Assistance Project.

Section VI

BIBLIOGRAPHY

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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